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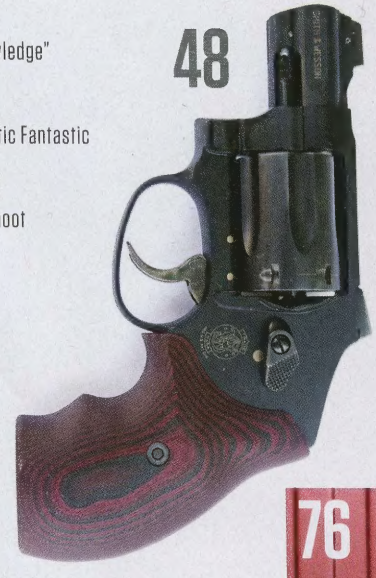

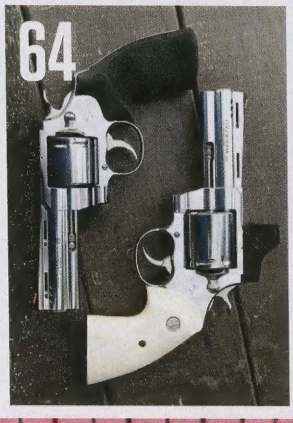

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FIREARM SAFETY

CONCEALMENT reminds you to be safe and always obey firearms safety rules:

1. Treat every gun as if it were loaded.
2. Always keep the gun pointed in a safe direction.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire.
4. Be aware of your target's foreground, and what lies beyond it.

All contents in CONCEALMENT are professionally photographed in a closed studio or range. Do not attempt to recreate any photographs depicted in this magazine.

1:1 ACTUAL SIZE

Throughout this issue you will see certain images are labeled as being 1:1 Actual Size. This designation is for the print edition of this issue. Because of the various screen sizes on different tablets and computers, we cannot always provide actual life size images in digital versions. We apologize if this causes any confusion and thank you for your understanding.

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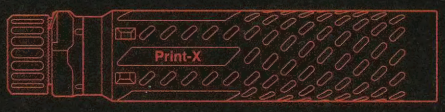

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URL: springfield-armory.com

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1

2

3

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Photo by Andrea Bogard

THEY NEED YOUR FEAR

They want your attention. It's what feeds them. Attention is a resource just as finite as food or air — something you don't think about much until it runs out. This is why everything is louder and stranger now, to better hijack our biology. This isn't a conspiracy theory, the idea of exploiting our base natures to benefit others, but a fact of reality casually discussed in marketing departments across the world.

Sex may sell, but nothing gets people more gripped than fear. We are wired to give close regard to threats, the more critical, the more sucked-in. Fear quickly consumes all of your attention, leaving little for anything else. Like diabetes of the mind, too much indulgence can make it chronic.

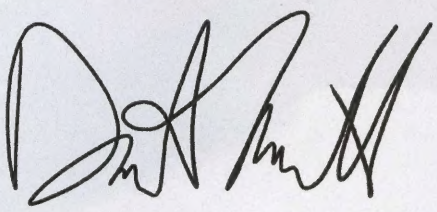
This wasn't done on purpose by cackling men twirling their mustaches, but a simple side effect of the path of least resistance. What is effective will grow, no matter how much you hate it. Watch out for those using scare tactics to sell — it's cheap and lazy.

Immediate fear, the situational kind before fights or tense encounters, can be more-readily managed. In this issue, Steve Tarani lays out proven techniques to practice to help you get through. The stuff that's taught to spies and CIA agents can be equally applied both on battlefields and boardrooms.

We have reviews in this issue that go a layer deeper, but we also have some that give a more-holistic perspective; a step outside and above. Steven Kuo brings us Kimbers and CZs. Mike Searson has Yeet Cannons and Pony Bears. In her CONCEALMENT premier, Kat Ainsworth Stevens dispels gun counter "common knowledge" about women. Annette Evans, as always, provides expert input about concealed carry considerations.

And we've got new holsters and gear, carry apparel you'll want to wear even if you're not, malfunctioning guns, some history, and more fun.

I can't pick a best issue of CONCEALMENT, I'm too close and it would be choosing between children — but this one is absolutely up there. Enjoy!



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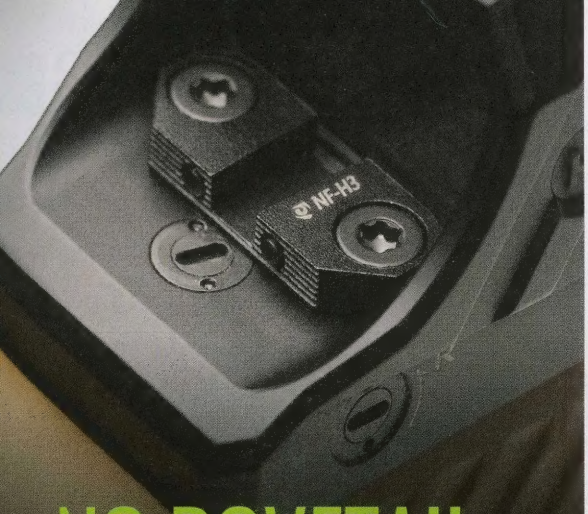

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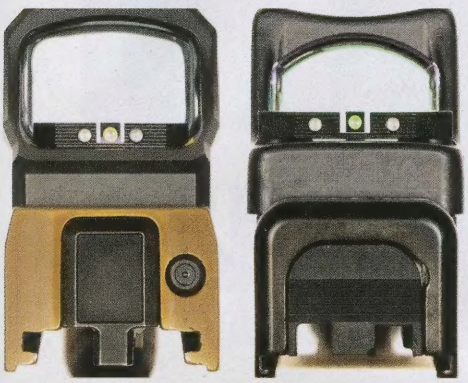

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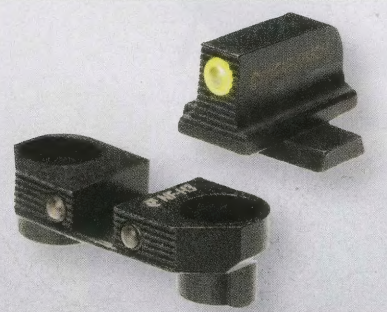

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1

CRKT

NUCLEUS

OAL: 7.38 inches

URL: crkt.com

MSRP: $113

NOTES: The Nucleus doesn't take its design cues from the boring clones prevalent in today's everyday-carry market. Instead, knifemaker Princeton Wong drew inspiration from the giant robots in his favorite childhood cartoon, *Mobile Suit Gundam*. The influence is clear in the knife's aggressive lines and mechanized aesthetic.

It looks cool, but does it work? Absolutely, thanks to the IKBS ball bearing pivot that allows for a fast opening. There are three ways to deploy it: back flipper tab, front flipper tab, and finger hole. The 3.19-inch blade is made of 12C27, a tough stainless steel that fights off wear and corrosion while easily taking and retaining an edge. Meanwhile, the handle is made of stainless steel with a G10 overlay. It's form meets function — anime style.

2

STREAMLIGHT

PROTAC 2AA-X USB

COLORS: Black, Coyote

URL: streamlight.com

MSRP: $105

NOTES: Imagine you hear a bump in the night. You grab your handgun and use its weapon-mounted light to investigate, only to find a relative coming home after a late night out — which means there's a good chance you've just muzzled a loved one.

That's why we're fans of handheld lights like the new ProTac 2AA-X USB. It allows you to illuminate the shadows without unintentionally flagging someone. The Streamlight's 550-lumen max output and 222-yard beam distance are impressive considering its weight (just 3.5 ounces) and portable size (6 inches long, roughly 0.75 inch in diameter). It also has a pocket clip and a holster for convenient carry options. Though compatible with AA batteries, it comes with a rechargeable cell and a USB-C charging cord.

3

OUTDOOR TECH

CALAMARI ULTRA PLUS 5-IN-1 CABLE

DIMENSIONS: 6.5 feet

URL: outdoortechnology.com

MSRP: $40

NOTES: Whether it's due to aging technology or a company bucking industry standards to create proprietary ports and connectors simply to line its pockets only to relent years later and join the party late (yeah, we're looking at you, Apple), there's been a need in recent years for charging cable adapters. Outdoor Tech stepped up to the plate with its Calamari Ultra Plus 5-in-1 Cable.

As the name denotes, this cable has 5 different connectors. On one end are three options: Lightning, Micro USB, and USB-C. On the other end is a USB-A or a USB-C head. These permutations allow you to charge and transfer data to all gadgets with a USB port, including Apple and Android devices.

4

GENERAL NANO PROTECTION

SUPER NANO GREASE GUN OIL

VOLUME: 13.5 fluid ounces

URL: dickinsonarms.com

MSRP: $15

NOTES: We all love to shoot guns. But not everyone loves to clean them afterwards. Yet, a lack of proper maintenance could lead to catastrophic failures. Now there's Super Nano Grease Gun Oil, now available from Dickinson Arms. They claim nanotechnology makes this different from other CLPs.

It features a hydrophobic protective agent with nanometric dimensions — plain words bei "this product coats not just the surface of your gun parts but also gets in deep to the microsco cracks produced by the firearm's mini explosio It removes carbon fouling, lubricates, and prote gun parts by repelling moisture and crud at the nano scale. Plus, it comes with an integrated straw nozzle for easy application.

5

5.11 TACTICAL

AYCE BELT

MATERIAL: 100-percent nylon

URL: 511tactical.com

MSRP: $35

NOTES: This isn't ideal as a shooting belt because it's a little too flexible. But the AYCE Belt makes a great and versatile belt for a wide range of occasions. The 1.5-inch-wide belt is made from 100-percent nylon that's stretchy but rugged. Its plastic buckle allows for micro adjustments for a personalized fit or, as its name implies, an accommodating fit after hitting the buffet. It also has a hidden key pass-through at the buckle.

The coolest aspect of the AYCE Belt is that it's reversible. One side is all black, making it suitable for work or casual wear. But when you really don't give a poop what the world thinks of you, flip it over to proudly display the honey badger design.

6

PYRAMEX

VENTURE GEAR TACTICAL VGTG10

SIZES: Small to 2XL

URL: pyramex.com

MSRP: $18

NOTES: Whether it's because the temperature is dropping or you don't want to shred your hands during intense training, wearing a pair of gloves can keep your digits safe so you can continue to shoot, move, and communicate effectively. The key for tactical gloves is that they don't hinder your dexterity.

Enter the new Venture Gear Tactical VGTG10. Also known as the Compression Fit Training Gloves, this pair offers a snug fit so you can retain exceptional control. They're also breathable thanks to moisture-wicking material, while the synthetic leather palms provide both durability and an assured grip. Moreover, the machine-washable gloves have a neoprene hook-and-loop cuff for a secure, comfy closure. Bonus feature: They're touchscreen compatible, so you don't have to remove them to use your phone or tablet.

7

THYRM

DARKVAULT 2.0

COLORS: Various, including Black and MultiCam

URL: thyrm.com

MSRP: Starting at $90

NOTES: Thyrm has produced all sorts of accessories that have enhanced the operational readiness of law enforcement, military, civilian shooters, hunters, and preppers alike. Its DarkVault 2.0 Critical Gear Case is the latest example.

This accessory was purpose-built to house smartphones during hard use. It can be attached to chest rigs, plate carriers, or any PALS-compatible gear, allowing you to use your phone for video recording, navigation, ballistics info, and more. Or, you can go digital ninja mode, so to speak, by upgrading to the Blocking Version, which reduces your electromagnetic signature and significantly lessens susceptibility to geolocation or data access. For an additional cost, you can add custom-cut adhesive Velcro loop panels to attach ID, patches, or other items.

8

MYSTERY RANCH

RIP RUCK BACKPACKS

COLORS: Black, Buckskin, Ponderosa, Sagebrush, Shadow, and Wildfire black, depending on model

DIMENSIONS: 15-, 20-, 24-, and 32-liter models

URL: mysteryranch.com

MSRP: $130, $150, $170, and $290, respectively

NOTES: Mystery Ranch just released updated versions of their popular RIP RUCK backpack line, for everything from everyday carry to hikes to one-bag travel, including a new 20L size. The "RIP" in the product name refers to the upper lid that's secured with magnets and zippers, so you can simply yank on it to quickly access the bucket-style main compartment. The packs are made of 330D Robic Kodra nylon, which is strong and very abrasion- and tear-resistant, with top-of-the-line #8 and #10 YKK zippers. The front panel has a laser-cut MOLLE panel for accessories.

All models have padded laptop sleeves, separated into a dedicated laptop compartment in the larger sizes. They have more organization than before, with sleeves, slip pockets, and zippered pockets inside and out, depending on the model. Some have exterior water bottle pockets, too. As you'd expect from Mystery Ranch, they're a joy to carry, with a molded body panel and comfortable straps. Additionally, the largest 32L model has a padded waist belt and adjustable telescoping yoke. Shown here are the 20L variant in Shadow and 24L in Wildfire black.

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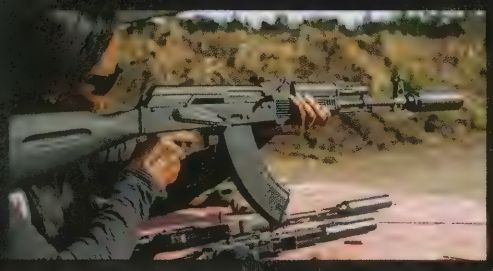

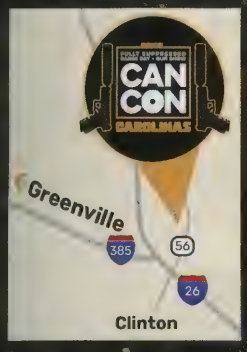

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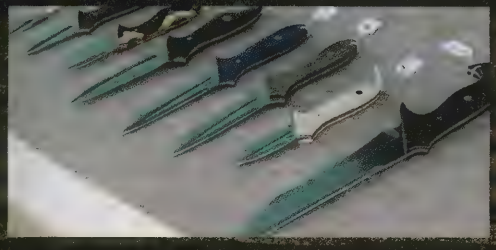

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THE YEET CANNON 380

Hi-Point's Threaded YC380

BY MIKE SEARSON

The intention of this column is to find and review affordable arms — because self defense shouldn't only be for those who can pay premium prices. Our goal has always been $200, but it's getting harder to find firearms under that price point without them being broken, outdated, or even worth writing about. But still, there are deals to be found if you know where to look. This Hi-Point YC380 was for sale at Cabela's in Reno, Nevada, and made the cut as a diamond in the rough.

ABOUT HI-POINT

Like it or not, Hi-Point is one of the leading manufacturers of handguns in the United States. These inexpensive arms are manufactured in Mansfield, Ohio (we go behind the scenes in RECOIL Issue 68). Previous names of the company include Haskell Arms and Stallard Arms — and in fact, a Haskel Arms .40 S&W was previously purchased f $125 to try out. It was later sold off, most because of the caliber.

In terms of the name of this pistol? Hi-Point is a very customer-oriented company and when they were debuting an upgraded model a few years ago they asked the inter net to name it. True to their word, Hi-Point went with the fan favorite: Yeet Cannon

THE BUILD

Hi-Point pistols are direct blowback firearms, using a heavy slide made of a zinc alloy to keep down costs as well as the ability to use a lighter recoil spring. The finish is a black powder coat.

The polymer frame features a rail to add accessories. This model features a threaded barrel, the ability to add a red dot sight, and it's had some more sculpting done to streamline the look. The front sight is the same style as those found on Glock pistols, for customization like a fiber optic or night sight if you wish.

Two other noticeable additions to the YC380 are a 10-round magazine and a grip safety. While it looks a lot better than previous offerings, it still has the look and feel of a Hi-Point.

ON THE RANGE

While .380 ACP can be a snappy round in many guns, the mass of the YC380 makes it feel downright pleasant. The trigger on this pistol breaks at about 5.5 pounds. It feels somewhat like an original S&W M&P for the sake of comparison.

A few boxes of Blazer Brass 95-grain FMJ and 1 box of Hornady 90-grain XTP were spent. Two rounds of Blazer failed to fire, but the blame may lie with the ammunition over the pistol. The two rounds that failed were tried in a different pistol, and didn't ignite in that one either. The Hornady XTP functioned flawlessly.

Groups at 50 feet were about 2.5 to 3.25 inches on average.

THE AWESOME

Hi-Point Firearms is a company that catches a lot of flak, mostly because of their price and looks. However, if you can get past that — they do work. The people running the company are some of the nicest folks you'll ever meet in the industry, and they actually listen to their customers.

It's ugly, but it works reliably and it's reasonably accurate. There's a lot of value in this pistol, as it's a step above their past releases regarding features. The threaded barrel, ability to add a red dot, and even the easy replacement of the front sight are all major upgrades. The new 10-round magazine is a nice, too.

Several years ago, I reviewed their .380ACP Carbine, and for the life of me, could not understand why it was made. There's no appreciable gain in velocity, .380 kind of hits a wall in barrels beyond 5 inches due to the small powder charge in the case. But Hi-Point's answer was simple: "Most of our customers aren't typical firearm enthusiasts. They buy a .380 pistol and wanted a carbine to shoot the same ammunition without having to invest in another caliber choice."

They saw a need, if not a demand, coming from their customer base and filled it. Not too many other companies do that these days.

THE OK

The YC380 is a on the heavy side for a .380ACP at 34 ounces. That's a bit heavier than a 9mm Glock 19. This will be the biggest issue for seasoned shooters: the weight and mass of the gun. Yet, that is also its strength for new shooters or the recoil sensitive.

THE AWFUL

Appearances aside, the only thing truly awful about the YC380 is the stigma from other gun owners, if you let that sort of thing bother you. If you don't like the pistol, don't buy it. Don't cast shade on those who do, either.

Many new shooters can't afford HK, SIG, or even Glock — and the old saying of "Buy a used police revolver or surplus military pistol" doesn't work anymore, as those have risen in price as collector's items.

The Yeet Cannon YC380 is an acceptable entry-level pistol. ▮H

With that threaded barrel, you can bling out with a comp or silencer.

★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

HI-POINT

YC380

Caliber: .380 ACP

Barrel length: 4.12 inches

Weight: 34 ounces

Capacity: 10 rounds

Overall length: 7.6 inches

Sights: Adjustable & red-dot ready

Finish: Black powder coat

Price: $210

Store: Cabela's in Reno, Nevada

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FITS: Wide variety of fitments with and without weaponlights or lasers

MSRP: Starts at $60 ($71 as shown)

NOTES: PJ Holsters has been making holsters since 2011, each one custom built to the customer's exact specifications. Their holsters are an interesting blend of old school and modern, with a number of customization options so you can lean more in whichever direction you prefer. Additionally, they offer a long list of fitments, including some uncommon guns (and EDC flex) like the HK P7M8 shown here.

Let's say your name is Hans Gruber, and you need to conceal carry your badass 9mm German stapler, but you don't want a leather holster. PJ Holsters has you covered. Their IWB holster is constructed of Kydex, in your choice of color and pattern. It's a taco-style design, folded over with rubber bushings and screws to adjust retention. Fitments for certain lasers and weapon-mounted lights are also available.

It's important to note that this holster is built-to-order for your preferences, but depending on how you configure it, there may be limited adjustments. For example, PJ offers a variety of belt clip options, but their most popular is a one-piece design where the holster and clip are molded from a single piece of Kydex. This results in a very simple and thin belt clip with minimal additional bulk and a low and smooth profile. Designate the belt size and degree of cant in your order and it'll be built that way, but you can't adjust it afterward. You may recall some one-piece Kydex belt clips cracking after heavy use in the past; to prevent this, PJ reinforced their clips with an additional strip of Kydex bonded to the inside. If desired, you can choose from other one-piece, polymer, and metal belt clips (such as an Ulticlip) instead, some of which have height and cant adjustments.

The holster has a full-height sweat guard and an optional claw that levers against the inside of your belt to pull your pistol's grip toward your body for better concealment.

Also shown is PJ's Kydex magazine carrier. Starting at $20 for a variety of fitments, they can be configured with your choice of belt clip, material thickness, bullets-forward or -backward, and for vertical or horizontal carry.

A marvel of HK engineering, the P7M8 is thin but heavy, with a lot of that mass up top. In our testing, our sample holster with reinforced belt clip and claw worked well, keeping the gun tight against our body while adding minimal additional bulk to the thin pistol. You can't defeat physics, but it was comfortable and concealed well.

You needn't daily carry a beautiful collector's piece like this P7. But if you know exactly how you want to carry your gun, spec out a holster from PJ with all your desired options and you'll be happy with the results.

WaltherArms.com/FreeOptic

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Purchase any PDP F-Series, Compact, Full Size, Pro, Match or Steel Frame and receive a C&H Precision Direct mount optic Valued at $338

C&H

ROUNDED BY CONCEALMENT EXPRESS

SIDECAR HOLSTER

roundedgear.com

FITS: Glock, SIG Sauer P320/365, Springfield Hellcat

MSRP: Starts at $95 ($100 as shown)

NOTES: The latest holster from Rounded by Concealment Express is their Sidecar Holster, designed specifically for appendix inside-the-waistband carry for your pistol and a spare magazine.

The system consists of a holster and magazine pouch connected via a flexible joint that contours to your body. Made of 0.08-inch Kydex, the holster is a pancake-style design with adjustable retention and an open muzzle to accommodate threaded barrels, compensators, or even longer slides. It's also deeply cut for optics.

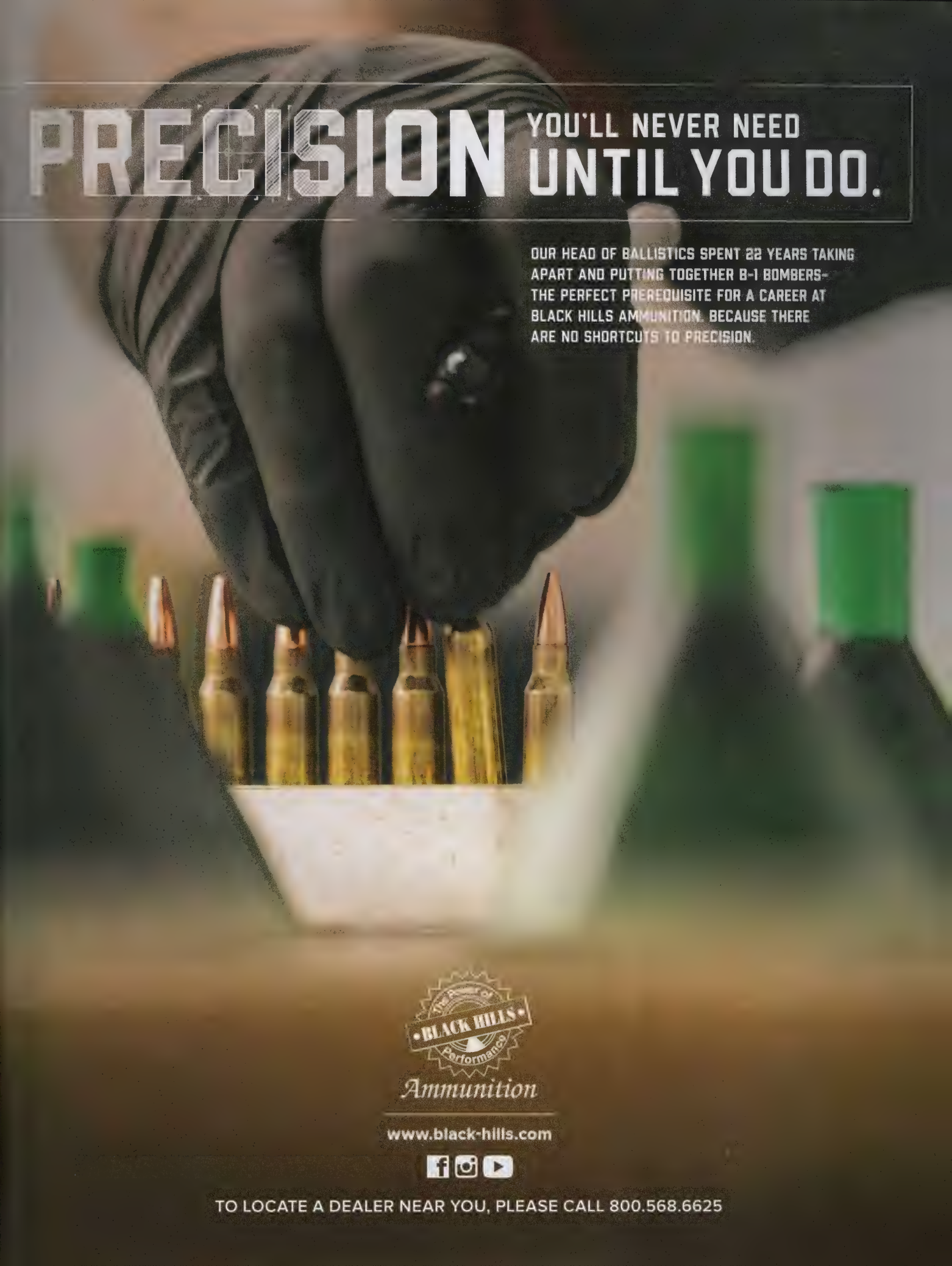
The polymer belt clip is positioned over the trigger guard, with a plastic claw that pushes your gun's grip tighter against your body to minimize printing. You can adjust ride height. If you prefer metal belt clips, you can opt for Ulticlips.

For those who don't like sweat guards, you're in luck, as there isn't much of one. Since the holster is symmetrical, this also allows you to switch hardware to the opposite side for either right-handed or left-handed carry. Mirrored claws are provided for either configuration.

The magazine pouch is canted for more comfortable reloads, with another clip to attach the whole system securely to your belt.

Rounded currently offers variants for the most popular guns from Glock, SIG, and Hellcat, with more fitments to come. Shown here is a Glock 26.

We found the holster to be well made and designed; it's comfortable and does a good job concealing a lot of firepower. While you can entirely remove the concealment claw, one of our testers would have preferred the option for a smaller one. Since it's made of plastic, you could also just trim yours down. One of our smaller-waisted testers isn't a big fan of holster-mag pouch combos, and not surprisingly this was no exception. If you have limited real estate around your belt line, you may prefer to stick with separate components. However, if you have enough girth, take a look at Rounded's Sidecar Holster.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UNTIL YOU DO.
OUR HEAD OF BALLISTICS SPENT 22 YEARS TAKING APART AND PUTTING TOGETHER B-1 BOMBERS– THE PERFECT PREREQUISITE FOR A CAREER AT BLACK HILLS AMMUNITION. BECAUSE THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS TO PRECISION.
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You're running out of excuses to avoid running an optic on your handgun. They're too big. They're too fragile. They're not bright enough. Debris can block the emitter. The battery life isn't long enough. You have to remember to change the battery — **No more.**

With its latest micro sight, the SCS Carry, Holosun has addressed all of those issues. To be fair, all but the last one has already been solved by multiple companies. But Holosun is ahead of the pack with its solar charging technology, and the new SCS Carry is essentially worry-free when it comes to power. A solar panel integrated into the top of the sight tops off a built-in rechargeable battery, which is rated for 20,000 hours — over two years. So long as you're not a vampire, the Holosun will just keep on chugging without any fuss. Periodic exposure to light will keep it powered essentially indefinitely; it charges much faster than it consumes power. Even if the internal battery were to eventually cease recharging, the solar panel can continue to power the sight on its own.

Holosun released the original SCS sight a couple of years ago, specifically for the Glock MOS mounting footprint. They subsequently rolled out versions to directly mount on other pistols, such as the Smith & Wesson M&P, Walther PDP, and H&K VP9. However, these sights have an open emitter design, so it's possible (though generally unlikely) for it to be blocked. The SCS Carry's emitter is enclosed and protected, so as long as you can see through the glass, the reticle will be there.

Unlike some of their other products, Holosun offers only one reticle option for this sight — green with a circle-dot reticle. You can cycle between just the center dot, just the outer circle, or both. It's very bright, with automatic brightness adjustment based on ambient lighting conditions. If you find it's not bright enough for your particular environment, you can press the function button to manually bump it up several st for 30 minutes, after which it reverts to normal.

In addition to activating the brightness override, that button on the left side of t sight also cycles through the reticles and turns the sight on or off. You'd never nee actually turn it off, unless you're not usin it at all.

The SCS Carry has a Holosun-K mount ing footprint, essentially an RMS-C footp less the two rear lugs; Holosun's recesse are also a bit shallower. Holosun includes adapter plate to clear those lugs for slide with all four of them; many guns like the P365 only have the two front lugs, so the accept both RMS-C and K optics.

So, what are you waiting for? It's time try putting an optic on your blaster.

CALDWELL
E-MAX SHADOWS PRO

Price: $170
URL: caldwellshooting.com

Exposure to loud noises can lead to permanent hearing damage. We need to protect our ears, especially when shooting. Over-the-ear muff-style hearing protection is effective, but they're bulky and particularly hot and uncomfortable during the warm seasons. Additionally, electronic units use microphones to monitor your environment, suppress dangerously loud sounds, and pass the rest through so you can maintain situational awareness, hear range commands, and easily converse with people around you. Without this capability, you'll be cut off from the world.

Caldwell's E-MAX Shadows Pro offer in-ear electronic hearing protection in a form familiar to anyone who's used Bluetooth earbud headphones in the last decade or so. Caldwell's earbuds come with customizable tips to fit your ears, with a selection of foam tips in various sizes for 25 decibels of protection and silicone tips for comfortable listening.

The earbuds connect to your smartphone or other device using Bluetooth, so you can use them as regular headphones. Ambient pass-through mode can be enabled or disabled, and loud sounds picked up by the microphones will be reduced to safe levels.

Buttons on the earbuds adjust volume, switch modes, and control telephone calls and media playback on your smartphone.

Simply drop your earbuds into the storage case with integral 700 mAh battery to protect and recharge them. They'll last about six hours in use, with two hours of charging time and 35 hours of standby. The case features status LEDs to keep you apprised of battery levels of not just the case but each individual earbud.

Caldwell includes a lanyard that you can attach to the earbuds on either end. Magnets snap them together so that when you remove your earbuds, they hang like a necklace for easy access. Also in the package is a USB-C charging cable and a zippered storage case to hold everything.

In our testing, the E-MAX Shadows Pro performed as advertised, providing effective and convenient hearing protection, though they won't put your AirPods to shame for audio. The earbuds spring to life as soon as you remove them from the case and shut off and begin recharging when you drop them back in. We appreciated being able to change settings with buttons without needing to launch an app.

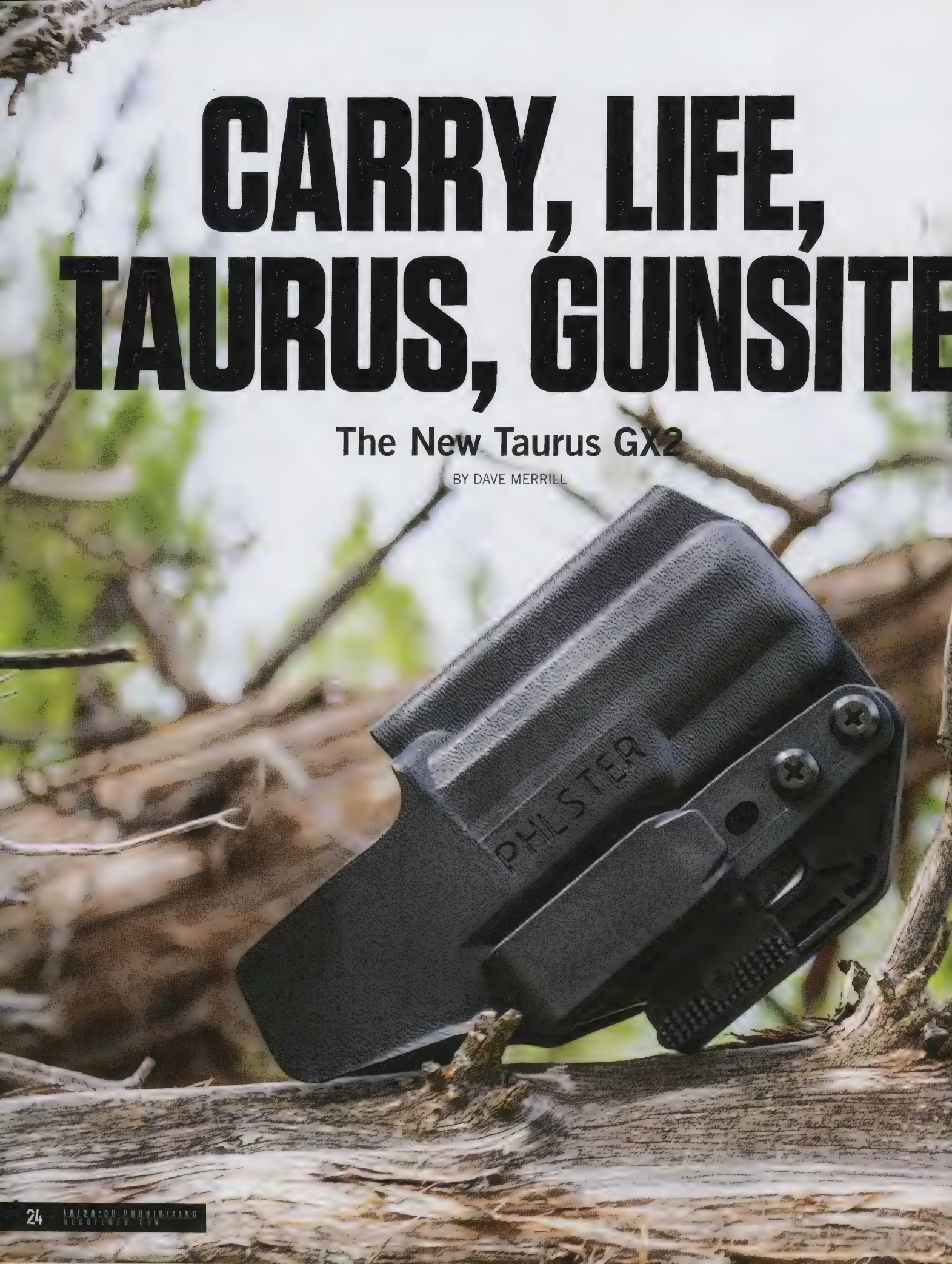
Strong winds can pass through some annoying wind noise; we've found this to be common with earbud-style electronic hearing protection. The optional lanyard works well, but you needn't use it if you prefer to run slick. Finally, we wish Caldwell would include loops on the charging case and storage case, so you could clip them on a belt or pack if so desired. In the meantime, we threaded a lanyard through the zipper pull on the storage case.

Check them out; your hearing is worth it.

CARRY, LIFE, TAURUS, GUNSITE

The New Taurus GX2

BY DAVE MERRILL



The desert has never been particularly friendly. Not to people and not to pistols.

Brazil-based Taurus first got their start back in 1939 producing machine parts. They got into guns in 1941, heavily focusing on the American market starting in the 1970s. With a long reputation of questionable quality, a real, tangible shift started when Taurus moved their American headquarters from Miami, Florida, to Bainbridge, Georgia, in 2019. It wasn't just a change of location but also of leadership; new machines came online and older designs refined.

While Taurus is certainly best known for their revolvers, one of their main modern efforts is the GX4 series of semi-automatic pistols. First released in 2021 as a budget-minded response to the SIG P365, the GX4 is a polymer-bodied, stagger-stack 9mm. In the intervening years, Taurus has put particular focus on maturing this product line, and now there are several variations with different features and capacities like the GX4 TORO, GX4XL, and GX4 Carry (see Issue 24 for more).

The spiritual concealed carry precursor was the Taurus G2c (see CONCEALMENT Issue 13), an inexpensive pistol that remains popular because it can often be found around $200. There are more than a million G2c's currently in circulation, but being released in the early teens means it's grown long in the tooth, so Taurus set out to replace it. Which brings us to the subject of this article: the Taurus GX2.

DESIGN DETAILS

You can safely think of the new GX2 as a baby between the legacy G2c and the GX4 — it's essentially a simplified GX4 intended to take over the role of the G2c for primary carry. And as you'd expect from a pistol designed a decade later, the GX2 has the G2c beat in most ways.

Firstly, the GX2 was made to be a shootable concealed carry pistol — this is decidedly different than so many others that are designed solely with concealment in mind. Small guns are easy to stash away, but when it comes to actually shooting them, they're found lacking. (See John Correia's "Making Pocket-Sized Pistols Suck Less" in CONCEALMENT Issue 20).

Like all thoughtful 21st century pistols, at least those that came after the SIG P320, the GX2 is a chassis gun. In fact, the GX2 shares a chassis with the GX4. While we haven't exactly seen a boatload of aftermarket add-ons, it's foolish not to future-proof and leave the door open for possibility.

While the grip doesn't have interchangeable backstraps like the GX4, it is sufficiently grippy. There are integral textured pads perfectly placed for stacked thumbs and straight trigger fingers. There's an honest-to-goodness

The safety is unobtrusive to the point that it may be hard to hit.

Picatinny rail up front that will accommodate popular subcompact lights. The safety isn't ambidextrous but it meets the minimum of being both unobtrusive while remaining easy to hit.

The slide has serrations aggressive enough to leave some skin behind, both at the rear for normal use and at the front for those who like to live life more dangerously.

Something that invariably draws groans and eye rolls among us are modern pistols produced that aren't ready for an optic. It comes off like a cheap trick in order to sell the same gun several times — companies wait six months to a year, add a hundred bucks, and then you'll get an optic plate option. Threaded barrel? Wait another six months to a year after that release, add another hundred bucks ... you get the idea. And admittedly, that was the knee-jerk reaction to first seeing the smooth-top slide of the GX2. Until we saw the price.

President and CEO of Taurus USA Bret Vorhees says, "We are solidifying ourselves as the entry-level option. Not everyone can afford a $700 pistol."

It's $310 if you're paying sticker, which means absolutely under in most

You already know how to take this one apart, just like how you already know what the basic striker-fire design is.

situations. A sub-$300 carry pistol doesn't need to come equipped to carry an Aimpoint Acro P2, and the silencer and compensator crowd will be looking elsewhere too. While the GX2 doesn't come ready for an optic, it does use what Taurus calls "industry standard sights" (read: Glock). The black rear is serrated to cut glare, and the front is a simple dot.

You might not get an optic mount, but what you do get at the sub-$300 price point is something that many say they don't want: a manual safety. Ever since the advent of Glock, the tactical training tribe has decried most kinds of safety devices. But importantly, those types typically aren't the ones buying inexpensive guns.

Market research shows that 80 percent of people purchasing at or near this price point want a manual safety, demonstrating a level of self-awareness not always seen among buyers. Just a little consideration goes a long way here, too. The people who are spending hundreds on holsters and thousands on training and ammunition are extremely unlikely to be picking up this pistol in the first place.

The standard, flush-fit magazine for the GX2 is a 13-round stagger-stack affair. While the GX2 uses the same magazine bodies as the GX4, the 13-round capacity means that they're a little longer, so most GX4 mags don't drop in. We're told the longer 15-round GX4 Carry magazines are A-OK.

We've said before that Mec-Gar is a great example of doing one thing extremely well. And the thing they do extremely well is produce magazines. As such, Mec-Gar is the OEM magazine manufacturer for a great many big brands, Taurus among them. But with the GX2, Taurus decided to bring everything in-house. This process has been imperfect, however, with some issues detailed later in this piece.

GUNSITE

Located in Paulden, Arizona, about 70 miles from Sedona, sits Gunsite Academy. First founded back in 1976, Gunsite has been a training destination for nearly half a century. It was the brainchild of Jeff Cooper, a Marine combat veteran, prolific writer, teacher, and instructor. Much of modern training and gun-gaming can be directly tracked back to him. While not everything that Cooper decreed has stood the test of time, we can't really expect it to either. After all, he was born in 1920 and fought in the Pacific theater of World War II followed by the Korean War — and because weapons, tactics, and gear constantly evolve, so does war and gunfighting. It's the same reason why every great military tactician ends up being outdated and every economist ends up eating crow, at least if they live long enough.

It seems to be human nature that if we make it to a certain age, no matter how smart or educated, we become less mentally flexible. With that in mind, I give Cooper the same grace I gave to my grandfather, who was lucky enough to reach a similar age.

There was a time when Gunsite was the butt of a joke among younger

There are dozens of ranges and thousands of steel targets at Gunsite.

There's something about the altitude that lends itself well to deep blue skies — wear your sunblock.

shooters. One of the "old man gun schools out west," synonymous with fuddery, where unless you were running an iron-sighted 1911 chambered in by-God-.45ACP you were undoubtedly as good as dead in a gunfight. Nothing changes tactics and techniques more than war, and in the 21st century, America has had more than two decades of direct experience. And thus, Gunsite Academy has been upgrading not only their 27 ranges across their sprawling 3,200-acre campus, but their course rubrics as well. And while sure, you'll still see instructors with slabsides and wheelguns, there are a great many dotted Glocks among them. Not to say that there's no Americana kitsch; each event kicks off with a hand on the heart for the Pledge of Allegiance, and you'll definitely hear some tactical aphorisms.

One of the ways Gunsite performs outreach to greet the wider community is by hosting gun manufacturers for their launch events. Range time and classes are taught by experienced instructors, to include the use of shoot houses and simulators. Lunches are good (the pesto chicken sandwich is excellent), and nearby Prescott is home to some exceptional hotels and restaurants. We've had staff at several of these, and most of the gun companies end up repeat customers because Gunsite is an easy, turnkey choice. This would be the first time for Taurus, but undoubtedly not the last.

The altitude and attitude of northern Arizona are unforgiving. The alkaline

You're not going to find any inexperienced instructors at Gunsite; all will be well seasoned.

The Qualifier holster from UM Tactical is a convertible. It can be configured for IWB, OWB, or AIWB and has a nice bright inside for contrast.

sand combined with the hot sun and arid land makes for a tough training environment that really runs guns through the wringer — it's far, far from a clean, climate-controlled indoor range. You might not get the same malfunctions in urban Atlanta or Algonquin, but you will in Afghanistan or Algeria.

To wit: The new GX2 magazines did not like the grit. Everything was chugging fine until they were dropped in the sand several times, then followers intermittently stuck mid-mag. A baseplate or two was said to shift, though we didn't directly experience the latter. To their credit, it was something Taurus employees immediately inspected and addressed, and our main question is which other media outlets will actually report any problems at all.

While Taurus has assured us they're fixing the issue, even with the current magazines you're unlikely to run into trouble — unless you're operating in Algeria or cosplaying YouTube torture tests. The lesson here is to check your gear. Take the time to inspect your CCW after every range trip, and at least semiannually if it doesn't leave the holster.

HOLSTERS & WARTS

Holsters are a typical issue with new releases, but Taurus was forward-thinking here. Right out of the gate, you can get a PHLster intended for appendix carry or the convertible UM Tactical Qualifier.

As expected from the entry-level market, the GX2 has some blemishes. The trigger has a wide face, complete with the Glock-style dingus drop-safety. It's fat and a bit unforgiving — more functional than fun. There are good striker triggers and there are safe striker triggers. This one biases toward the safety end of the curve. Certainly shootable.

The GX2 suffers from the same problems all diminutive striker guns do, in that the slide has to be stroked aggressively when chambering. Those with reduced hand strength may do well to look elsewhere, or at minimum try before you buy.

The aforementioned safety is currently right-hand only. While it's unobtrusive if you want to forgo it, the slim style makes it harder to hit for those with smaller hands. If you fall into that camp, the suggestion would be to try using the thumb of your support hand rather than the shooting one. Or maybe just Dremel it and call it a day.

The sights are just alright. While the GX2 isn't setup for optics, that Glock dovetail gives you some additional options if you want to go through the trouble or troll your friends. You could use an adapter from the likes of Duec Defense, Strike Industries, or OuterIm pact. You could use an optic meant for Glock dovetails like a Meprolight microRDS or Leupold DeltaPoint Micr You could, for reasons only known by yourself and God, have it milled by a machine shop. But the reality is that i you're looking for a concealable Taurus ready for an optic, you're probably going to be purchasing the GX4 TORO instead. And oh yeah, GX4 slides can ride on the GX2 frame, too.

When it comes to modern concealment holsters, PHLster has been setting the standard for quite some time now. It's always awesome to see them as an option with anything new.

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The Taurus GX2 puts out more for your money.

TAURUS
GX2

Caliber:	9mm
Capacity:	13, 15
Barrel Length:	3.4 inches
Overall Length:	6.2 inches
Width:	1.2 inches
Height:	4.9 inches
Weight (unloaded):	19 ounces
MSRP:	$310
URL:	taurususa.com

LET'S TALK RECALLS

In mid 2023, Taurus issued a safety recall for a number of their GX4 pistols. While the internet is incredibly loud and snarky about recalls, the reality is there's tangible disincentive to actually issuing them. Gun manufacturers are exempt from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, so any and all recalls are entirely voluntary. Liability lawsuits are still a thing, but companies that serve the lower end of the market are also less likely to see them. So, when you do see a recall, it's a sign a company is being responsible.

There have been a number of wrongful death and liability lawsuits over the 80-year tenure of Taurus. We certainly can't speak to their entire history of all their brands, but we can say that we've only seen increased accountability and better quality control than in the past.

Make the jokes you want about motivations, it's absolutely better for us when companies do that. Respect, Taurus. You did the hard thing.

VALUE

The combination of premium design patents expiring, increased access to high-tech tools and techniques, and profit-by-volume production means that everything, absolutely everything, is getting objectively better with guns and gear. Our cheapest guns today are more reliable than the best of 20 years ago, with better prices by half. Per the inflation calculator from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the MSRP of the GX2, $310, is the equivalent of about $174 in the year 2000. But if you wanted a reliable striker gun in that year, you were going to have to shell out more than double that amount.

And in terms of volume? Taurus factories produce an average of 9,000 guns a day. That's an awful lot of affordable hardware.

Just as with televisions, the inexpensive ones are now really awesome, but the expensive ones are still better. That means there are some things you have to either find to be an acceptable compromise, or simply spend more money. With guns and televisions, in the future you will get more for less, if you're willing to wait.

With the Taurus GX2, you have to be OK with the possibility the mag may gum up if you drop it regularly in sand. Also it's totally workable left-handed but it's not ambidextrous. Do you dr mags in sand? Do you train with you left hand? Well — if do, then you're already our kind of people. Undoubtedly, you're already carrying someth you trust.

LOOSE ROUNDS

In a world where seemingly every company is clamoring to pop out the next "Glock-killer" or become bigge than SIG Sauer, it's refreshing to se one understanding where they sit in the current market — and maximizi that place.

I can't currently think of any bett carry striker-gun at this price point, warts included (at least at the time writing, September of 2024). Unles something goes batty in full produc tion, like a weird material failure (th were hundreds of rounds through ou guns, not thousands) this should be fine. Good, even.

Vorhees said that he wanted the Taurus GX2 to set a new standard at this price, and it has. Best of the worst? Hits outside its weight class Call it a good one to recommend to price-conscious friend.

The ante has been upped.

BALLISTIC ADVANTAGE

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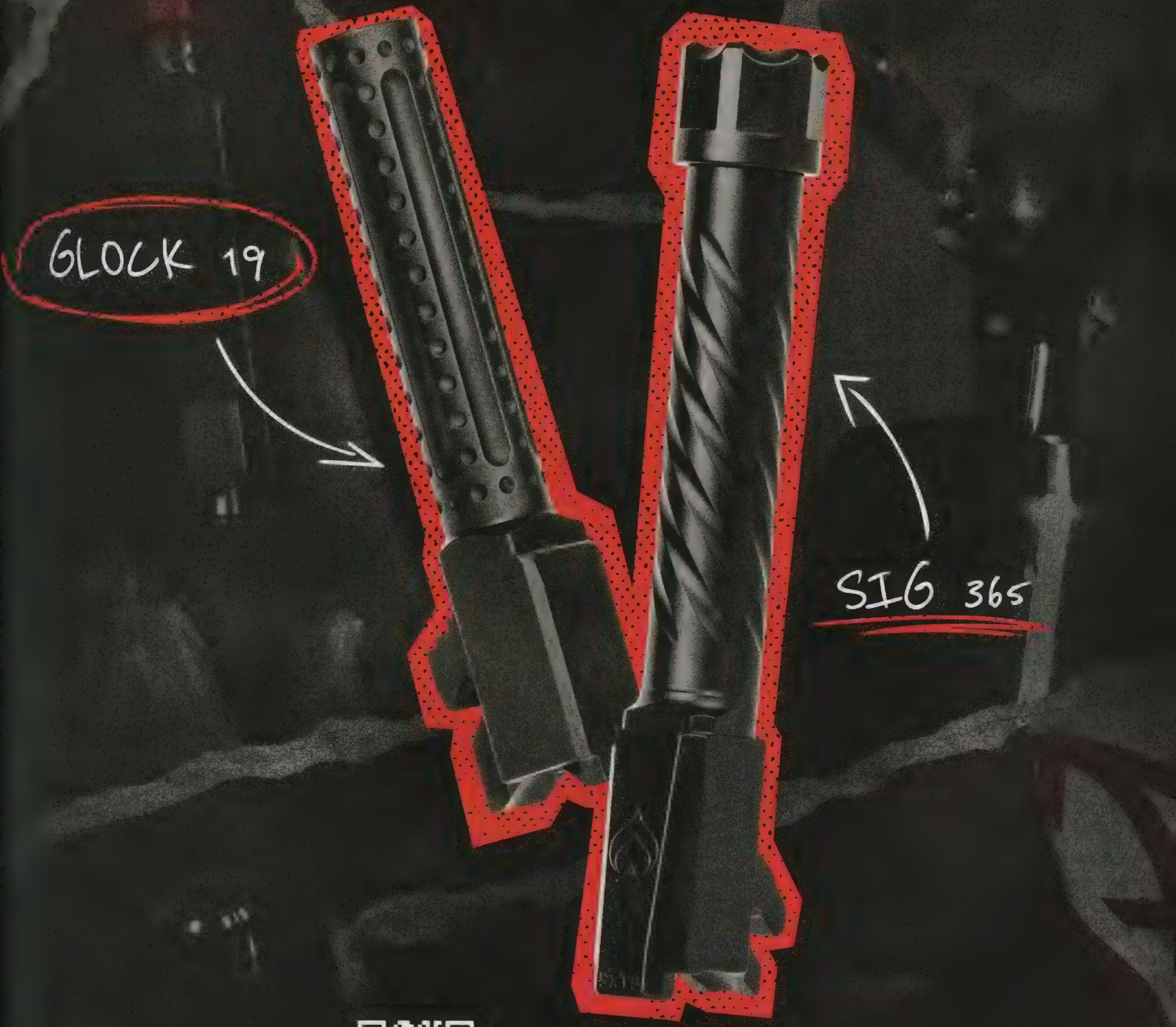
FOR GLOCK AND SIG



LEARN MORE AT:
BALLISTICADVANTAGE.COM/PISTOL-BARRELS

ARMED & EXERCISING

Keep Running with Arrowhead Tactical and Shield Arms

BY DAVE MERRILL

It's not hard to conceal a pistol or other weapons in most clothing. The general rule is that the more layers you're wearing and the less physical movements you're making, the easier to is to heft that heater. This is why many concealed carriers, at least those who live in states with seasons, have "summer carry" and "winter carry" rigs.

But when you're running or performing other exercise, typically not only is your clothing primarily designed for athletic activity, it can also be quite form fitting. Essentially, the opposite of easy and comfortable carry. Today we're going to bring you through some new options from Arrowhead Tactical Apparel, as well as a fanny pack from the company you'd usually think of as a specialized magazine manufacturer.

DURABLE QUARTER ZIP

Arrowhead Tactical Apparel

Arrowhead Tactical is no stranger to special concealed carry clothing, but we can safely say that their new Durable Quarter Zip is the best we've seen from them yet. The materials look and feel premium and it performs at a high level under sweat too.

Currently available in both quarter-zip and hoodie form, the Durable has some tricks under the hood. Inside the front pocket is a nice, taped zipper which allows secret access to your waistline. The genuine YKK zipper is smooth and secure, meaning that front pocket is a usable front pocket, too. And to top off the magic trick, the edges of the pocket are false — there are magnets that keep them in place, allowing the ability to pull a full-size gun out of a smaller space.

ARROWHEAD TACTICAL

DURABLE QUARTER ZIP

Color:	Midnight Black, Navy Blue, Woodland
MSRP:	$90
URL:	arrowheadtacticalapparel.com

CARRIER TRAINING SHORTS

Arrowhead Tactical Apparel

Concerning clothing in general and athletic apparel in particular, it always shows when it was designed with carry in mind. What you really need is something that can go both ways, and Arrowhead Tactical Apparel is a damned good answer here.

You wouldn't think someone was carrying a gun inside their 5-inch gym shorts, but *hotdamn* you can. It's true that the Carrier Training Shorts feature a drawstring and a nice YKK zippered pocket for valuables--by itself it's great in the gym or while running trails.

The trick is within their waistband. They patented it as a "Carrier Retention Waistband" but it boils down to being able to run a hidden belt inside the shorts. If you want to carry a gun inside these shorts, you *have* to have a belt. You can run any belt and essentially attach any holster to it, but we 100 percent recommend getting the Arrowhead Tactical OmniCarry Belt with these.

The OmniCarry is strong, infinitely adjustable, and easy to don inside the shorts. We've used other belts for this, including other belts from Arrowhead Tactical Apparel, but this is the one to get. Save some bucks by bundling.

ARROWHEAD TACTICAL

CARRIER TRAINING SHORTS

Color: Woodland, Flecktarn, Sandman, Desert

Inseam: 5 inches

MSRP: $60

URL: arrowheadtacticalapparel.com

ARROWHEAD TACTICAL

OMNICARRY RETENTION BELT

MSRP: $40

URL: arrowheadtacticalapparel.com

JUNK SACK KIT

Shield Arms

If you know only Shield Arms for one thing, undoubtedly it's for their specialized magazines. Like a 15-round mag for the Glock 48/43X (which only holds 10 OEM) or their 9-round G43 magazine. Shield Arms now has some soft goods that are just as specialized as their magazines, like the Junk Sack Kit.

Fanny packs, whether worn around the waist or as a sling, are *back in*. Essentially any fanny pack which you can fit a pistol is workable, but it doesn't mean it's optimized for it (See CONCEALMENT Issue 39 for a guide).

What sets the Shield Arms Junk Sack apart from the rest is that it's 100-percent designed as a primary carry. Sure, there's a stretchy front zip which will fit a phone, wallet, and keys, but this one is all about serious business. Which is to say — you can pull out your pistol *damned fast* with it.

No zipper, no dangles, but a pull-tab combined with strong magnets and hook-and-loop. The base of the inside is lined with loop so you can roll with your holster of choice and it includes the basic band you see here. Stays well against the body when running, too.

We've been impressed enough that it's seen some real use, enough to learn that the front stretch can look a little tired, but absolutely functional. ▮H

SHIELD ARMS

CARRIER TRAINING SHORTS

Color:	Black, Fallout Grey, Ranger
MSRP:	$140
URL:	shieldarms.com

DON'T CALL IT A 2011

Old Designs, New Names, and the Springfield 1911 DS Prodigy Comp AOS

BY DAVE MERRILL

Whether you want to call them double-stack 1911s or 2011s, guns like these used to live solely in the domain of gamers, paraprofessional tinkerers, and shadetree 'smiths. They started gaining popularity in recent years because of the combination of reduced cost, increased reliability, and consumer boredom with plastic pistols. There are online arguments about what exactly is and is not a 2011, but most of them are merely pedantic quibbling about the Champagne region of France. But let's cover all the *well ackchyually* of it.

Despite the name, the origins of the OG 1911 lay in the late 19th century. The most celebrated American firearms inventor, John Moses Browning, first put pen to parchment for this pistol in the 1890s. It was officially adopted as the mass-issue American military pistol on March 29, 1911 — hence the designation. Many variations would be produced for combat use until 1985, when it was usurped by the Beretta M9; some specific spinoffs were still used by select special units through the GWOT era.

While lovers of the 1911 will declare it to be the most respected pistol on the planet, the reality has more to do with proliferation than preference. America pumped out nearly 2 million of them during World War II, and even the Nazis made some in Norway at the same time. After the war, not only did many nations make their own authorized and unauthorized copies and clones, America supplied her allies with surplus and also sold them to the public by the pound. Needless to say, they were cheap and plentiful; the 1911 fit into every gap and crack it could, especially with pistol competitions.

Over the centennial of the 1911 there were a great many variations, but for our purposes discussing the 2011 there are three features to detail:

Doublestack Mags

Every gun with an automatic action relies on a functional magazine to run. The original 1911, shooting the stubby-and-straight .45ACP, has a single-stack, relatively upright magazine. Para Ordnance, a Canadian company founded in the mid 1980s, set out to increase capacity. This northern neighbor produced the first functional double-stack magazines and frames in 1989. These widebodies were fat and heavy, but worked relatively well compared to others, at least in .45ACP and .40S&W.

Beyond the double-stack magazine itself, some stipulate that 2011 magazines must sit upright like the originals. This is said to be to more

Takedown requires a tool, which is no big deal here.

You can see the seam between the poly grip and metal frame if you look.

easily allow the steep 1911 grip angle, but it just as easily serves as an anti-9mm measure, as the caliber doesn't work well that way.

Today, more as a testament to obdurance than engineering, we have high-capacity, 1911-like magazines in 9mm that actually run.

Modular, Two-Piece Frame

Sandy Strayer and Virgil Tripp, respective founders of Infinity Firearms and Staccato, shared the patent for a two-piece frame and handgrip assembly. This design allowed a pistol to feed from new double-stack mags, but with a more-slim grip. Initially applied for in 1992, the patent was granted on March 15, 1994 — a scratch over six months before the Clinton Crime Bill was signed into law, which restricted the manufacture of magazines over ten rounds.

Reportedly it was Virgil Tripp who first coined the term "2011" (pronounced "twenty-eleven") back in September 1993. Exactly like how the 1911 is really a 19th century pistol, the 2011 is planted firmly in the 20th — the name sounded very futuristic in a world where Sears catalogs still circulated.

The utility patent for the two-piece frame expired a year after the namesake in 2012, but it would be some years before economies of scale, manufacturing capabilities, and reliability would increase enough for the general public to really take notice.

Made by Staccato

Though the patent for the frame features is now long expired, the trademark is not. A few months before their utility patent was set to expire in July 2012, Staccato successfully trademarked "2011" in regard to firearms.

This is why there are plenty of guns that people and publications will call a 2011, but the manufacturers themselves usually will not. Which brings us to the featured pistol of this piece, Springfield Armory's 1911 DS Prodigy Comp AOS.

PRODIGY COMP AOS

Springfield Armory released their first Prodigy back in 2022, and we reviewed it in RECOIL Issue 63. While it's not going to be to everyone's taste, it brings a bevy of boss features out of the box at a price unheard of

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RELY ON TAURUS

for something American-made. (While Springfield imports and rebrands an awful lot of guns, the Prodigy ain't one of them).

Available in 4.25-inch (shown) and 5-inch models, it's ambidextrous, optic-ready with the Agency Optic System, has a great trigger, and is incredibly accurate. The Prodigy shares a grip texture with the Hellcat, something which Springfield Armory dubs Adaptive Grip Texture. And of course, this one is comped.

COMPENSATING

Despite their seemingly interchangeable use in common parlance, ports, brakes, and compensators aren't the same thing. While they all aim to change the feel of a gun while it runs, the way they go about it are decidedly different.

A muzzle brake is designed to reduce felt recoil, a compensator is for reducing muzzle climb, and both are typically separate devices attached to the end of a barrel. Ports are generally intended to reduce rise but are windows drilled directly into the barrel itself. All of them use ammunition exhaust for operation.

Brakes and comps require gas expansion chambers to be the most effective, pushing gas onto a flat surface before it flows from the device. It's not the same for ports, though those reduce muzzle velocity and can shave off small pieces of projectile during operation.

So, if ports are cut into barrels, and the Springfield Armory Prodigy Comp has that hole cut into it, isn't it really a port? Yes. No. Maybe a bit of both.

The Prodigy plates have integral window-eating irons but you can go custom if it bothers you too much. On the lower right you can get a view into the port and see that flat face the gas presses against.

Though there's a large hole cut directly into the barrel, the Prodigy Comp has what's essentially an integral compensator rather than a traditional ported setup. The heavy match-grade bull barrel allowed Springfield to machine an expansion chamber into the end of the barrel itself rather than attaching it after.

Does it work? Absolutely. There have been a number of aesthetic brakes and other devices out there, many of which require the use of hot ammunition to actually do anything, but this gun runs flat as hell with *everything*. Though it should be stated that a steel pistol that weighs a hair over 3 pounds with an optic and fully fueled doesn't exactly bounce around under recoil. Ripping through mags on the range is a helluva good time here.

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SPRINGFIELD ARMORY
1911 DS PRODIGY COMP AOS

Caliber	9mm
Capacity	17, 20, 21
Barrel Length	4.25 inches
Overall Length	7.8 inches
Height	5.5 inches
Weight (unloaded, no optics)	33 ounces
MSRP	$1,699
URL	springfield-armory.com

We've yet to encounter any real issues, but when we're talking 9mm 2011s it just means we haven't put enough rounds through it. These guns are a little more complex, which means they take a little more time, care, and consideration.

LOOSE ROUNDS

Any handgun with a 1911 action that feeds from a double-stack mag, *especially* if it's chambered in 9mm, at minimum it can be casually called a "2011" for shorthand. And if it has a two-piece frame on top of that, it can *definitely* be called 2011. Like Q-Tips, Kleenex, Vaseline, and Velcro, 2011 is a trademark that's become part of common language.

Three pounds when ready to go means that muzzle stays low.

The original 1911 was designed in a time when machine labor was very expensive and man labor was *cheap*. While we live in an opposite time, where hand fitting always comes with a premium, we finally have the machines, designs, and knowhow to really push the envelope of what's possible without having to shell out for a custom 'smith.

No 2011 is a beginner blaster, including this one. But it's also no longer solely relegated to the realm of nerds and wizards who want to swap springs and triggers and otherwise spend their free time tuning. In part this is because of the price, but the larger part is what you're getting for the price you pay. It wasn't terribly long ago that this pistol with this level of customization would have cost the same as a decent used car, but no longer.

The 2011 in general and the Prodigy in particular represents the forward, leading edge of our current collective construction capability. The high water mark of mass manufacturing. We have an endless supply of striker-fired plastic 9mm pistols. They're plentiful, reliable, soulless, and far, far less fun than this one. Give this one a try.

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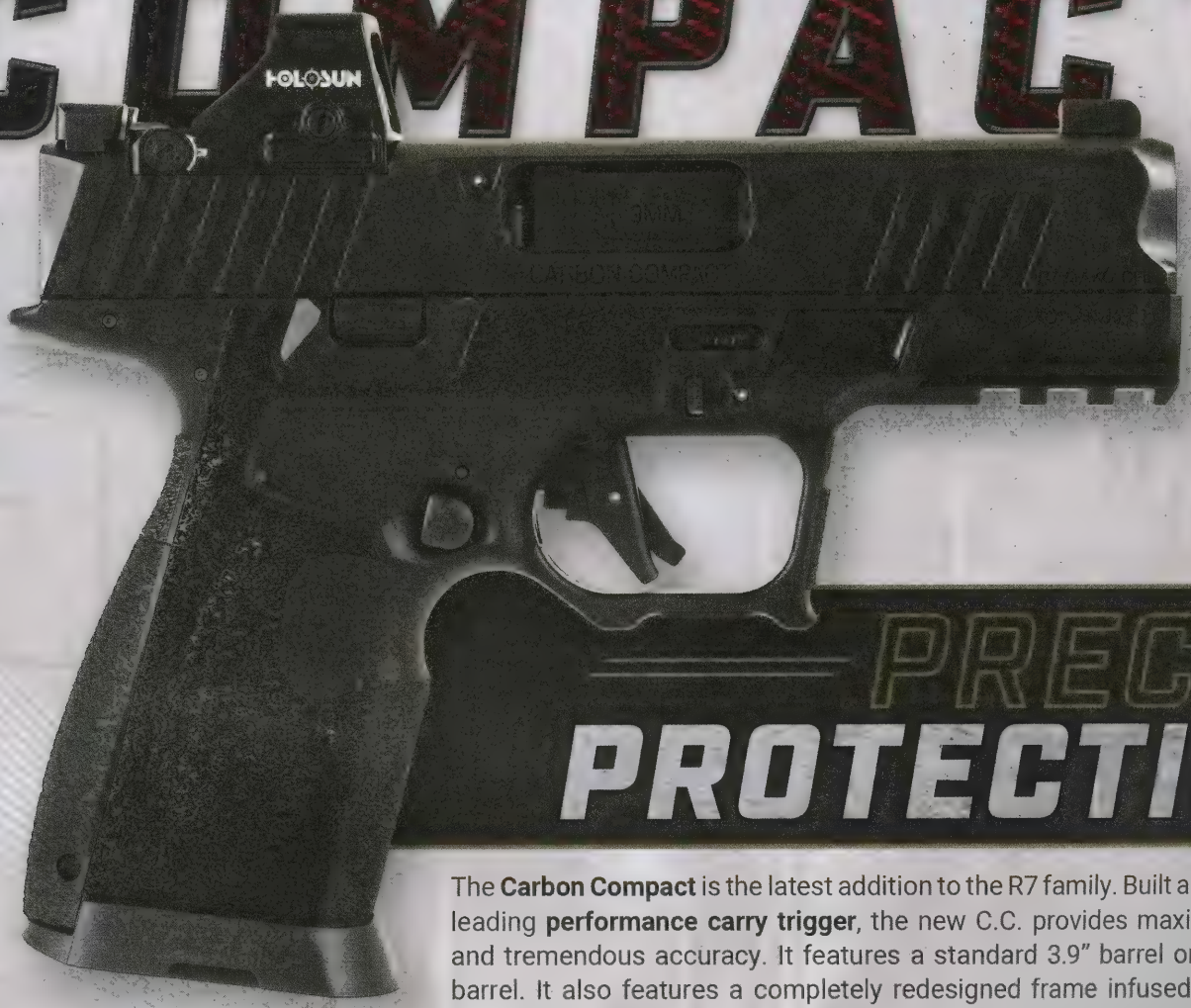
CARBON COMPACT



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TRAINING WITH YOUR CARRY GUN

Some Considerations

BY ANNETTE EVANS

Welcome to the next step on your journey as someone who responsibly carries a gun for self-defense! You've thought about and come to terms with the idea of using lethal force to protect innocent lives. You've educated yourself on the laws and rules that apply to an armed lifestyle. You've selected and purchased a gun and holster. Now it's time to learn how to use your gun effectively against threats to your life. Taking classes and practicing are important, but one aspect you may not have thought about is what gun you should use when you train. The right answer isn't the same for everyone, so let's walk through things that you should consider.

There is no better way to familiarize yourself with the gun you actually intend to use for self-defense than to use it. Most people don't have resources or inclination to have their carry gun and an exact match for it, no matter how good of an idea that might be, and that's OK. Even if they do, they're likely not entirely clones and there may be minor differences, especially as the practice gun gets used *more* than the carry gun. The triggers will not be identical, with one ever-so-slightly lighter or smoother than the other. Manipulations like racking the slide or locking it back will become easier on one than the other. Changes may be subtle and not affect your ability to shoot each gun at a similar level. Or they'll be enough to make shooting your carry gun unfamiliar enough to affect your abilities.

The additional mechanical wear that results from training and practicing is one of the reasons against using your carry gun for those activities. Nobody wants their self-defense gun to fail at the moment of greatest need, and it's not always obvious that something is about to break. Using one gun for all of your needs means that you will need to frequently perform inspections and preventative maintenance, including replacing certain parts on a regular schedule before they have an opportunity to cause problems. It's a good idea to do that anyway, but especially important if you intend to rely on the gun in question for your self-defense. After all, having your gun go down at the range is annoying, inconvenient, frustrating, and maybe embarrassing. Having your gun go down in a violent encounter could result in serious injury or death.

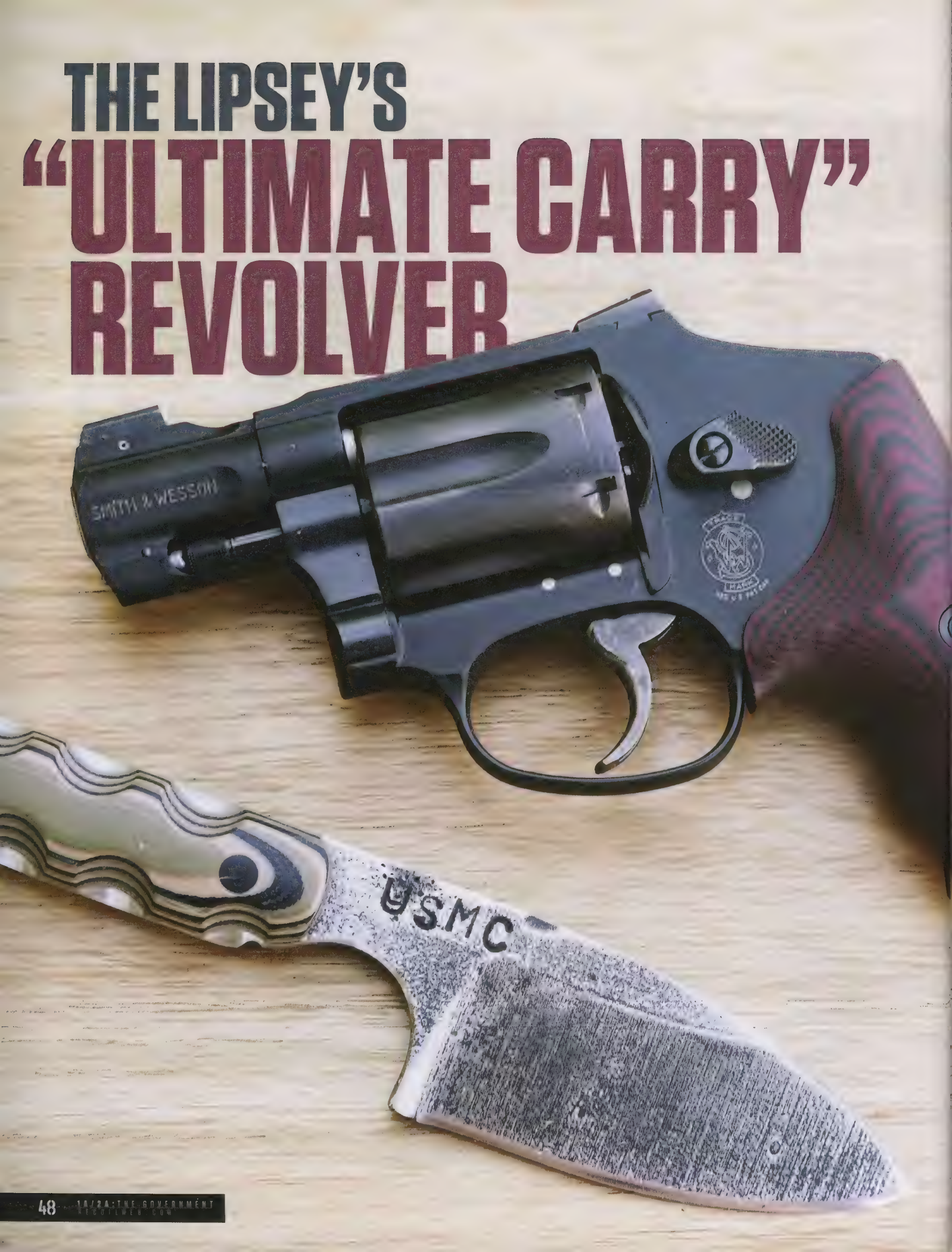
Having a working gun is a start if you want to use it to defend yourself, but you also need to be able to shoot it quickly and accurately. The sub-compact or micro-compact guns that are popular for concealed carry are also difficult to learn how to shoot well, and appropriate carry methods and holsters can introduce complication. Training and practicing with a "range gun" that has less recoil and easier-to-manipulate controls removes challenges that can make it hard for you to learn the basic skills you need to defend yourself. Using a holster that isn't concealed means you'll have one less thing that can go wrong and cause a safety issue when you're trying to pay attention to your instructor or your performance. By making learning less challenging and physically painful, you're more likely to learn more and faster, and gain skills transferable to your carry gear.

You do have to be thoughtful about the differences between your range and carry guns, though, because they can cause you to be less effective when you're needing to use your gun in a real-life situation. For instance, the sights on your range gun might be all-black irons or an optical sight with a bright green chevron, with shots landing on your targets slightly above your aiming point. By contrast, your carry gun might have three dots on the irons or an optical sight with a small red dot, and shots from that gun land on your targets directly in line with where you aim. It may seem a subtle difference but could affect your ability to accurately shoot when it counts because you're looking for a different set of sights — all that assuming you're able to draw your gun effectively from concealment when you're used to using a holster hanging opening off your hip.

What you mostly shoot and what you carry don't necessarily have to be the same. The difference between a carry gun and a training gun can seem subtle at first, like the revolvers above. Some others end up like little clone (or clone-ish) guns like on the left, at least thematically.

Many reasons can drive your choice to train with your carry gun and holster, or practice with a range-specific setup that isn't the same by a little or a lot. Budget, of course, will always be a factor. If you can only afford one gun and holster, then you'll need to pay attention to all of the considerations that come with using that gear for everything. If you have a bigger budget, or know you'll need a gun and holster that's more pleasant to shoot and simple to work with, then the opposite considerations will come into play. The important part is to be thoughtful about your choices and what they'll require of you.

THE LIPSEY'S "ULTIMATE CARRY" REVOLVER



Smith & Wesson Teams Up for the 432/632UC

BY MIKE SEARSON

Smith & Wesson, in partnership with major distributor Lipsey's, unleashed a new revolver this year that's really grabbing a lot of attention. The S&W 432/632UC (Ultimate Carry) is the current crest of compact wheelgun development, boasting one of the most comfortable grips of all time, a six-shot (as opposed to five-shot) capacity, and a set of extremely usable sights. Chambered in .32 H&R Magnum, the 432/632UC is capable of firing shorter rounds such as .32 S&W Long and .32 S&W Short.

First glance was a big "meh," because it was mistaken for a S&W 442/642UC — a five-shot .38 Special. J-frame .38s have been around a long time, and aside from the grips and sights, there wasn't a whole lot of anything interesting there aside from the upgrades to the sights, grips, and use of ti pins. That could just be a personal burnout related to a large number of .38 Special revolvers in the safe.

A similar revolver in .32 H&R Magnum, on the other hand, was an attention getter.

REVOLVER RESURGENCE?

Earlier this year at the 2024 Shooting, Hunting, and Outdoor Trade (SHOT) Show, there was a noticeable paradigm shift from AR and Glock clones to — of all things — lever guns and revolvers. Revolvers are interesting; every four or five years someone wants to confine them to the dustbin of history, and every seven or eight years someone else declares a revolver resurgence.

The truth is that revolvers aren't going away anytime soon. The revolver is *the* American gun. Sure, there are American semi-autos like the Colt 1911 and the S&W M&P or Ruger P-series, but the wheel gun is coming up on 190 years and is as American as apple pie. While the nations of Europe jumped on the semi-automatic bandwagon from the start, Americans held onto their revolvers a lot longer.

My own personal foray into revolvers came later than my interest in semi-autos — but not by much. Learning handguns in the 1980s through the Marine Corps meant starting with 1911s and M9s. Revolvers seemed quaint and outdated ... until I fired one. What kept me shooting and collecting them was a love for reloading and, of course, the Magnum power factor. Small concealable revolvers like the S&W J-frames, with Colt D-frames later.

Before we had reliable and concealable semi-autos of an appropriate power factor, small revolvers ruled the roost. They could deliver a potent round on target, often from concealment, while still tucked away in a jacket pocket if the revolver used an internal hammer. Semi-autos still can't do that with any degree of reliability.

OK, WHY A .32?

To put it simply, a lightweight alloy frame .38 Special revolver loaded with +P type loads will beat up your hand and give you a somewhat slower follow-up shot even under ideal circumstances. The .32 family is less brutal and gives you an extra round, which is more important in a slower-to-reload revolver than a semi-auto that could potentially give you 10 to 20 rounds in a magazine that can be changed and ready to go in a second.

The reason for this chambering goes to two revolver gurus: Darryl Bolke and Bryan Eastridge, who played a big part in the development of these models by Lipsey's. They asked these two instructors what they'd like to see in an ultimate carry gun. Bolke shocked everyone by asking for a six-shot .32 alongside the five-shot .38.

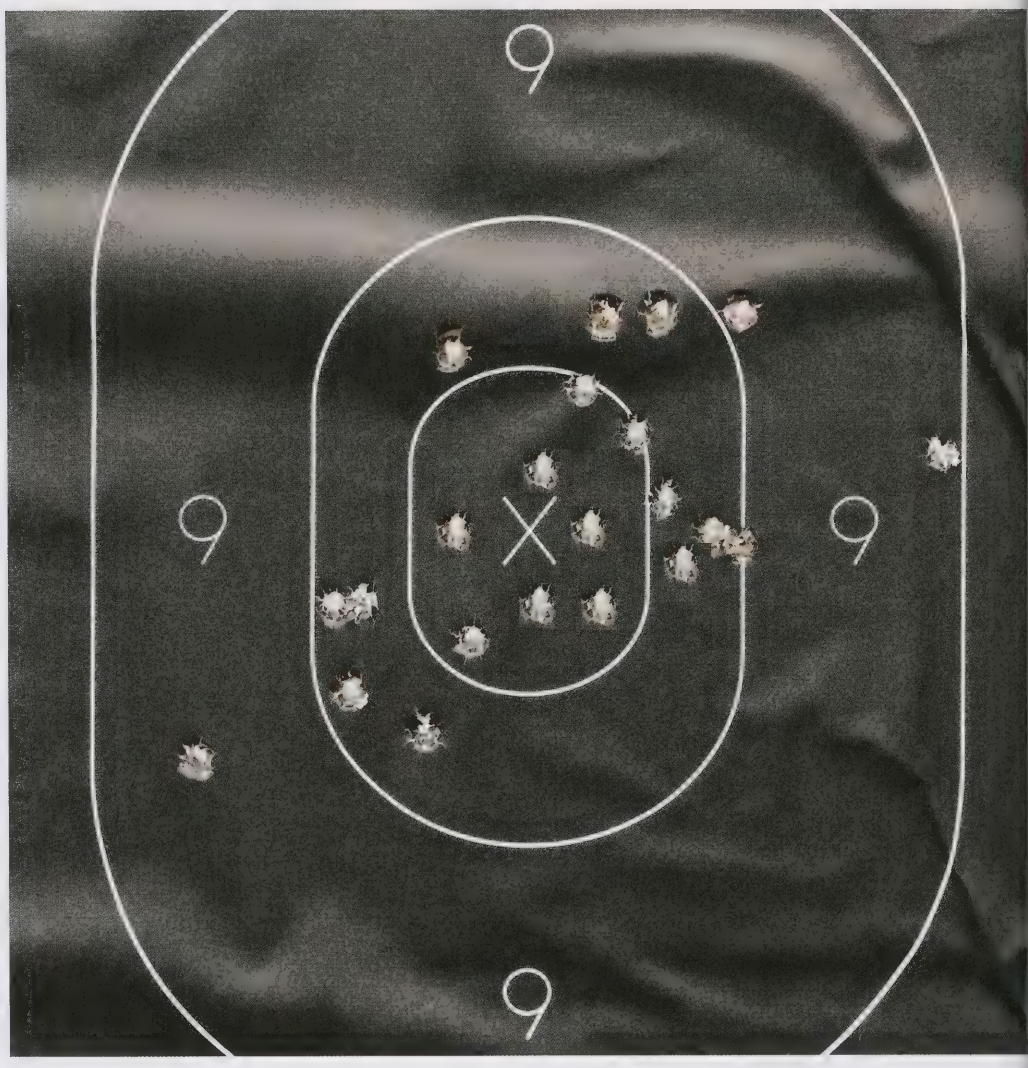
Lipsey's raised the bar on these guns by going with G10 VZ High Horn grips at their suggestion. Boot cut to fit to the bottom of the frame and completely wrapping the front and back, they fill the hand like no set of wood grips ever could and give a positive feel unlike the rubber grips of days gone by.

The .32 transmits far less recoil and makes these a very enjoyable revolver to shoot. Although, the shootability is enhanced by a set of very usable sights — a big dot tritium up front and a black serrated Novak-style rear.

Other nice touches to prolong the strength and life of the revolver were the use of titanium pins in the construction and the absence of the S&W internal lock that nobody ever asked for and nobody ever wanted.

AMMUNITION SELECTION

Of course, some of the old boys complained when .327 Federal Magnum wasn't an option, but the reasoning for this was sound. According to Bolke, the guns would have to be made from Scandium to yield the light weight and accommodate the higher pressure. This, of course, would yield more severe recoil and drive the price up. The goal was to make these revolvers affordable to the shooting public.



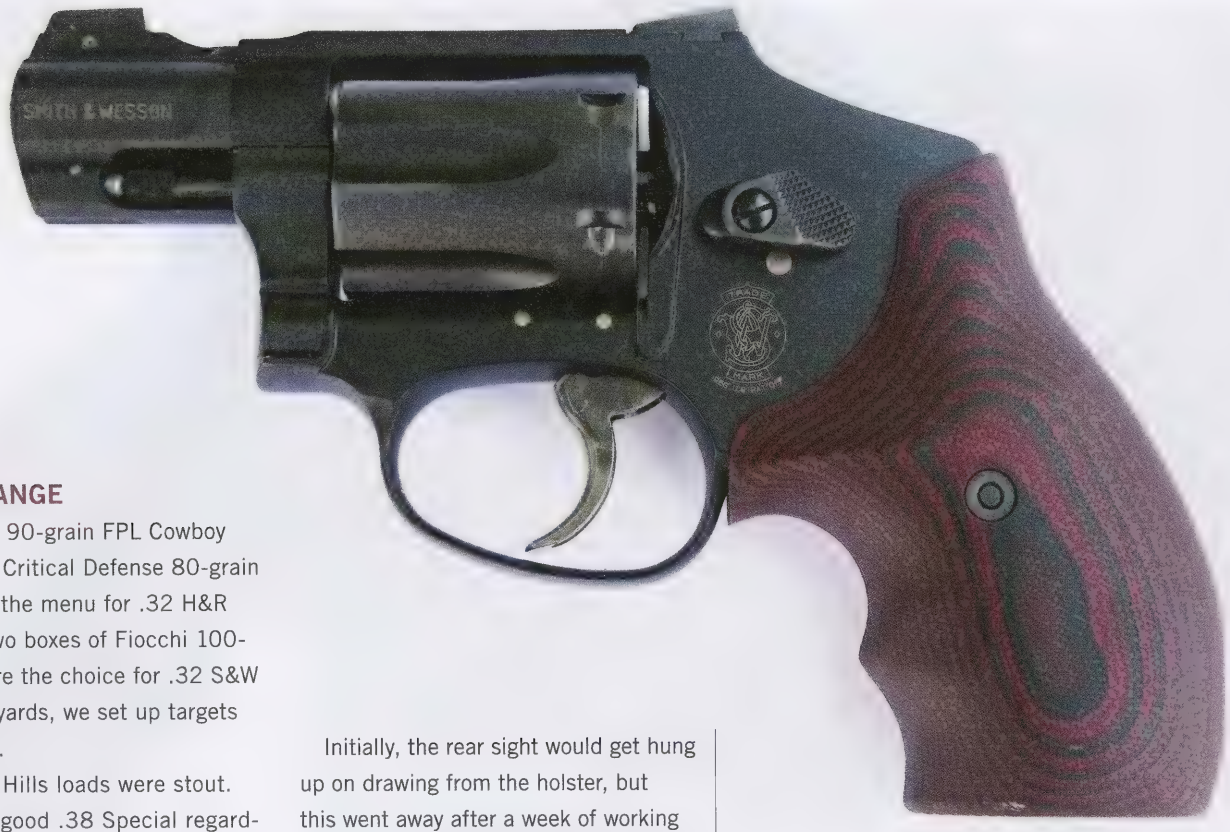
Not awesome, not awful, but totally acceptable.

.32 H&R Magnum is an interesting round. It's been around since 1984 and has been compared favorably to the older black powder bottle-necked lever gun cartridge .32 WCF (32-20) and to .38 Special, although it uses a much lighter bullet (90 to 100 grains). It's a proven hunting and defensive cartridge.

Because we're dealing with a straight-wall revolver cartridge, you can shoot shorter centerfire rimmed cartridges such as .32 S&W Long and .32 S&W Short. The Shorts are kind of a waste, as the ammo is more expensive and harder to come by these days, but the Longs are a different story.

Fiocchi offers a lead hollow-based wadcutter in .32 S&W Long. That means that the bullet is a cylinder-shaped affair with a hollow cavity at the bottom of the projectile. These rounds are soft shooting, highly accurate and excel at penetration and poking holes in things. This makes them a good choice for the extremely recoil sensitive, and they're not too hard to find.

The DeSantis Flex Tuk can be worn both inside and outside the waistband and even in a cross-draw configuration. It works extremely well worn appendix.



We know the name was decided by a marketing department, but it's not far off the mark in the realm of wheelguns.

ON THE RANGE

Black Hills 90-grain FPL Cowboy and Hornady Critical Defense 80-grain FTX were on the menu for .32 H&R ammo and two boxes of Fiocchi 100-gr HBWC were the choice for .32 S&W Long. At 25 yards, we set up targets and let loose.

The Black Hills loads were stout. Not unlike a good .38 Special regarding recoil and recovery. The average group size was 2.7 inches. Hornady's Critical Defense felt a bit stouter and maintained the same size groups. Shooting the Fiocchi was close to shooting a .22LR as far as recoil and accuracy were concerned. Those groups shrank to less than 2 inches.

Hornady's Critical Defense had a little more of a bite than the other two, but in actuality just felt like a standard .38 Special load. Accuracy varied on this one, with some very tight groups and a few noticeable flyers.

HOLSTERS

DeSantis sent us a Flex Tuk holster for concealed carry testing. This is a leather holster with a J-clip or a C-clip that can be worn IWB, AIWB, or in cross-draw fashion. I've been using the same holster for a different model revolver for about 10 years, and it works extremely well as an appendix carry rig, especially if you sit or drive most of the day.

Initially, the rear sight would get hung up on drawing from the holster, but this went away after a week of working with the holster and the revolver. Note that many factory-made leather J-frame holsters use retention off the top rear of the revolver, and the sight may hang up on this area. Pushing forward and then pulling out corrected this and became muscle memory within a week of daily practice.

LOOSE ROUNDS

Lipsey's got this to us quickly and seems to be very dedicated to these models. It'll be a standard offering for a long time to come and offers fans of the revolver a soft-shooting yet viable self-defense option.

If you're still unsure about the effectiveness in .32 H&R in a self-defense situation, Lipsey's offers these models in .38 Special with identical features, except those models will only hold five rounds instead of six.

This lightweight revolver definitely has a place at the table. Not just for the recoil sensitive, either. The ballistics reveal that the .32 H&R and .32 S&W Long HBWC excel at penetration while keeping felt recoil to a minimum. The superior sights, grip profile, and relatively soft recoil make this J-frame a winner. Ultimate Carry isn't too far off the mark.

SMITH & WESSON
432UC

TYPE:	Revolver
ACTION:	Double action only
CALIBER:	.32 H&R Mag
FINISH:	Matte black
FRAME:	Aluminum
STOCK/GRIPS:	VZ Blk Cherry G10 UC High Hea
BARREL LENGTH:	1 7/8 inches
OVERALL LENGTH:	6.3 inches
CAPACITY:	6
WEIGHT:	16 ounces
MSRP:	$759
URL:	lipseys.com, smith-wesson.com

For more than 45 years, SureFire innovation has delivered cutting-edge solutions to high-stakes problems. The Scout Light® Pro series of long gun weaponlights provides the most low-profile and flexible mounting solution on the market. SureFire SOCOM suppressors won the most extensive suppressor trial ever conducted and have an impeccable service record worldwide. SureFire handheld lights are the gold standard in tactical illumination and SureFire EarPro® Sonic Defenders redefine what's possible in passive hearing protection.

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COOL UNDER PRESSURE

Staying Ahead of Fear in the Face of Deadly Threats

BY STEVE TARANI

It's no secret that the coolest cucumber can think clearer and perform better in a violent physical altercation. Countless documentation of historical events has been written about the critical importance of staying cool under pressure, from Wyatt Earp to Kyle Carpenter. There are three things that can be done to keep your cool, should it hit the proverbial fan; listed in order of priority, they are: prepare your mind and body, map your environment, and have an operational plan.

Humans need current information to make an accurate assessment and formulate a viable solution to a tactical problem. Anything other than relevant physical and mental input, rapid assessment, and a realistic solution can cause significant decision-making delays. In a life-and-death situation, even a few seconds of processing time can put you behind the action-reaction power curve.

If you expect to stay cool, you'll need to allow that mind-body input-processing-solution process to run without a hiccup. There are two approaches to streamlining this process — one psychological and the other physical.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION

Looking at it from the psychological perspective (mind), at times, your perception of a threat may be so intense that it could cause a "freeze response." People who have experienced this have sometimes described accompanying physical symptoms such as tunnel vision, auditory exclusion, fine motor degradation, an inability to physically move, and the like.

Most people are concerned about what they call being "frozen with fear." However, you can effectively prepare for and overcome such a psycho-mechanical "freeze" both proactively (pre-freeze) and reactively (post-freeze).

Proactively, you can run through potential high-threat scenarios in your mind. The subconscious registers these imaginary vignettes no differently than if they were actual events. By watching these scenarios unfold in your mind's eye, you gain a familiarity.

Reactively, you can take a deep resetting breath, and keep your eyes moving to break tunnel vision and gain continuous visual and audio input from your immediate surroundings. This causes your body to continue functioning on the conscious level and can help override the autonomic panic mechanism.

Even during our daily routines, many of us have experienced information overload that clogs our decision-making process.

Speaking practically, what being "frozen with fear" more accurately describes is the brain being overwhelmed. The brain must process information to determine your best course of action. If that mental process is clogged, then you in effect are frozen, not with fear per se, but bogged down in a self-induced mental processing quagmire. Some call this analysis paralysis. The root cause is inbound information that may be new, unfamiliar, and threatening.

Proactively running mental self-rehearsals, engaging in force-on-force training, judgment exercises, and/or use of force training makes the experience no longer something new to your mind. Such proactive measures further mitigate information processing overload and decision paralysis b making such scenarios feel familiar.

Yes, from a psychological perspective there's nothing much you can do about the "threatening" part, but you can certainly inoculate yourself against newness and unfamiliarity, which removes at least two-thirds of the mental processing roadblock. Th is critical to prevent psycho-mechanical freeze.

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

Looking at it from a purely physical perspective (body), if you've neve been in a face-in-the-dirt drag-down knock-out violent physical altercation then such an experience would be a brand-new one to your body. You'd b unfamiliar with the nuances of physi-

or combat. If you had experienced aggressive bodily impact prior, then it would no longer be new. If you were previously trained in boxing, martial arts, or some other type of hard skill (physical training), your body would at least be familiar with certain aspects of aggressive physical contact such as how to best develop receiving a damaging impact, make evasive movements, and other related body behaviors.

Training in hard skills is the most effective form of tactile inoculation available. It familiarizes you physically with the intricacies of aggressive physical action. After you've rolled on the mat with someone trying to choke you out, almost no action with [illegible] to pull off you in the street will really bother him much anymore. You've been there, done it before.

to experience such activities as "just another day at the office." Minus previous exposure, physical experience, or familiarization, you place yourself at a tactical disadvantage. Real-world training in any hard skill is a recommended proactive measure that preps your body by preventing new and unfamiliar physical experiences from crippling mechanical function.

From a physical perspective, there's nothing you can do about the "threatening" part of it in terms of physicality, but by training in any type of hard skill such as shooting, ground-fighting, boxing, martial arts, and the like, you can gain a level of familiarity so that it's no longer a new or unfamiliar physical experience.

Psychologically new and unfamiliar incoming information and physically new and unfamiliar experiences can cause a processing jam both in mind and body, even when two out of the three [illegible] mentally and

The fight-or-flight response can literally be your best tactical advantage, but only if you've trained your mind and body to [illegible] to take full advantage of it. [illegible]

physically affords you a significant tactical advantage. You will be able to process a tactical solution faster (both mentally and physically) than those who would otherwise mechanically freeze.

It's no surprise that the military and other government agencies (such as those providing protective services and the like) require rigorous psychological and physical training as a job prerequisite in preparing both mind and body.

MAP YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Most people believe that situational awareness is just a matter of "looking around" or "keeping your head on a swivel." It's so common that these cliché lines can now be found in action-adventure movies. There's a lot more to it than just simply looking.

How many times have you looked at your watch and then had to look at it again to bear in the actual time? It's not what you look at but what you see that matters. Looking is simply a matter of placing your eyeballs on something, whereas seeing is a matter of being mentally engaged with your environment.

Taking visual and audio control are the keys to mapping your environment. This valuable skill takes time to develop. Next time you go into a restaurant or a coffee shop or a store, take a minute to just stand off to the side for a second and look and listen for anomalies — those things that don't seem to fit the environment. You may be surprised to find what you discover in this simple, easy to run exercise.

The second part of mapping your environment is to locate and identify your highest and most likely threat areas. These would include any structural entry or exit such as doors or windows. Commonly referred to as the "fatal funnel," doorways, narrow halls, and stairwells are natural chokepoints. You don't want to find yourself stuck at a chokepoint in a violent physical altercation. Identify your chokepoints and how you would avoid them.

Lastly but certainly not least important in mapping your environment is identifying cover, concealment, fields of vision, and fields of fire. Will that knee-high wall, table, or protruding structure stop a rifle round? Mapping your environment is a recommended active measure and something you can do on-site without anyone even suspecting what you're doing.

Environmental mapping ties directly back to mind body prep in terms of interacting with your environment. Engaging with your immediate environment displaces any newness or unfamiliarity that may present itself within your surroundings, which further attenuates the probability of a psycho-mechanical freeze. Interacting with your environment both mentally and physically significantly contributes to formulating a layered solution to any burgeoning tactical problem.

HAVE A PLAN

In the world of aviation, pilots always strive to be cognizant of the dangerous and cascading chain of events that can arise from simple oversight, negligence, laziness, and overconfidence (complacency breeds contempt — that being the most inexcusable cause). These common operational blunders are the behaviors that generally lead up to an emergency. By being cognizant of these behavioral failures, pilots avoid ever having to implement the exigent response skills or reactive measures mandated annually in flight simulators.

Boxing and martial arts can help you condition your response to bodily impacts, reducing the shock you'll feel if you get hit.

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How many times have you checked your watch without realizing what time it says, or glanced at a sign without actually reading it? This is the difference between looking and seeing – only the latter involves conscious mental engagement.

The same applies to operational readiness. If you have taken proactive measures to prep your mind and body to neutralize the effects of processing new and unfamiliar information and experiences, you're a step ahead of the next guy who has not. If you take the additional measure of mapping your environment, you're then mentally engaged with and in further control of your immediate surroundings.

One more thing that you can do to help keep your cool should it hit the proverbial fan is to come up with an op plan. If the front door is no longer an option for you, then target your egress for the back door. Determine which pieces of cover you will employ and which route will get you there quickest with the least amount of physical injury.

Needing to keep cool means you're physically reacting to an active threat with which you're engaged. As it's going down, take a deep cleansing breath to clear (or possibly unfreeze) your mind and plan your next move. Don't just spin around in circles. You need to think on your feet.

Speaking of feet, staying mobile is a priority — moving targets are more difficult to hit than stationary ones. Staying mobile is the only way to create distance (which is your best friend) between yourself and the threat. More space equals more time, which equals more opportunity to solve the tactical problem.

Most folks think, *Well, I'll just walk in and place my back against the wall so I can see what's going on.* OK, that's not a bad initial idea, but then what? What's your op plan if you *do* see something? Do you have an unimpaired field of vision? Where are the margins of your fields of fire should you need to go to guns? Do you even have a backstop? If it's a no-shoot scenario, then to where is your first tactical movement?

If you had to move yourself and your family out the kitchen or back door, you'd need to get there incrementally in a full-blown firefight. How and where would you move to get to that next piece of cover? What are your safety options along the way?

You'll most likely not be able to follow your initial op plan all the way to its terminal objective — Plan A hardly ever ends up working out — but even *having* one to start with puts you ahead of the power curve. You have saved the step of *needing* a plan. It's always better to have and not need than need and not have.

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Pilots are a good example of operational readiness. They proactively plan and train for various emergency scenarios so that if one occurs, it won't feel new or unfamiliar. This helps them react significantly faster.

COOL UNDER PRESSURE

Prepping your mind and body both proactively and reactively, mapping your environment by identifying ingress, egress, choke points, fields of vision, fields of fire, and the like, plus having an op plan to follow during either a shoot or no-shoot scenario are the necessary gray man tools in your tool kit. They afford you the opportunity to gain the initiative, stay ahead of the action-reaction power curve, and keep your cool when the mercury rises.

QUICK TIPS TO NOT LOSE YOUR SH!T

CATCH A BREATH

One of the first signs of panic is how you're breathing, and it's directly tied to how your heart is beating. Often breath gets quicker in an effort to increase blood oxygenation but very quickly this can spiral into losing consciousness. Other times, the breath may be unknowingly held in a losing attempt to slow the heart, and this has the exact same result.

If you're going to maintain your decision-making conscious brain, you need to manage your heart. And to do that, you need to control your breath.

Breathing exercises are not just for yoga studios, and this technique has been used by special units for decades. The most basic is called the **Box Breath** or **4-Count Breathing**. Like a box, it has four steps:

- Inhale slowly while counting to four. Let your stomach expand and feel the breath come in.
- Hold your breath for a count of four (this one can be the most difficult).
- Exhale to a count of four, emptying your lungs if possible.
- Repeat.

This technique seems simplistic, but it can be difficult to perform under pressure unless it's practiced. Use your mind to resist the urge to hyperventilate, assure your body it is getting enough oxygen. Give it a try during physical exercises and as you go about your day until it becomes second nature. Some advocate the breath coming in the nose and out of the mouth but none of that matters so long as you're controlling the pace of your breath. There are also variations in counts from different yoga practices, and those are likely fine too.

USE YOUR SENSES

You can avoid "getting sucked in" and overfocusing on a perceived threat, or break yourself free from tunnel vision, by intentionally engaging your senses. This helps keep you grounded, and the easiest way is to actively identify objects or features with each.

In order of typical effectiveness:

LOOK

Physically move your head from one side to the other to break tunnel vision. Identify two or three objects by calling them out, out loud and to yourself if necessary. Reading signs and locating doorways are easy buttons.

LISTEN

If you've just been in an explosion or gunfight this one can be tough. Still, actively try to identify environmental sounds. Just as before, single them out to ensure you're actually paying attention.

TOUCH

Some people will lose the feeling in their fingers, hands, and feet when panic rises. You can help combat this by rubbing your fingers or hands together. Touching a wall, the texture of your clothes, or other exposed parts of your skin.

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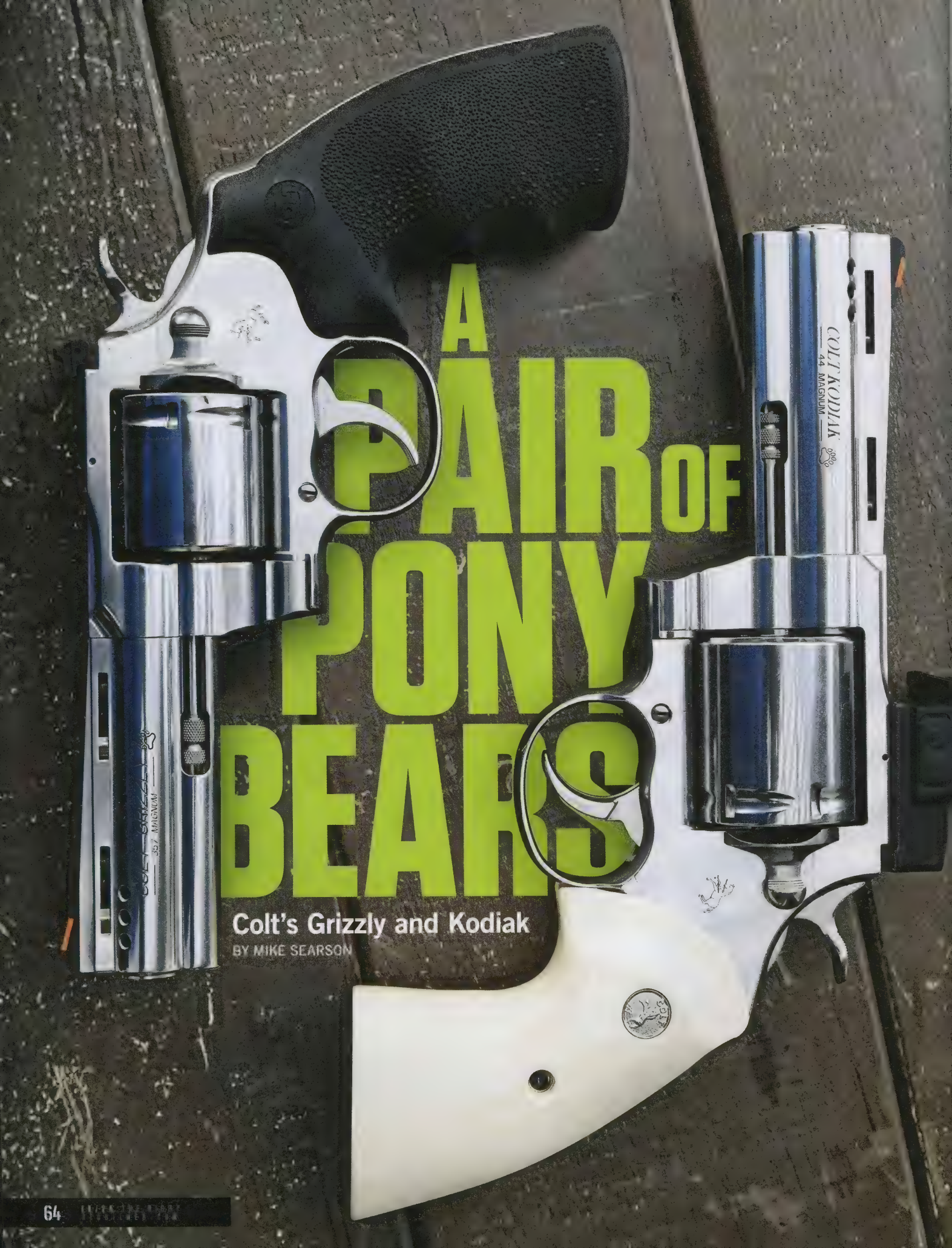

A PAIR OF PONY BEARS

Colt's Grizzly and Kodiak

BY MIKE SEARSON

Whether you're a casual collector or have gleaned any history of Colt, you're undoubtedly familiar with the Snake Series of revolvers. The Cobra, Python, King Cobra, Anaconda, Diamondback, Viper, and Boa are known as Colt's Seven Serpents. Back in 1994, Colt released two limited runs of revolvers with a different animal naming convention: the Grizzly and the Kodiak. They only made 1,000 Grizzlys and 2,000 Kodiaks. These were Colt Custom Shop offerings only available to select distributors at the time. As collector's items, these limited original revolvers can go for as much as $10,000 each based on condition and configuration.

Well, they're back. A little bit different than the originals but in a lot of ways much better. They may not ever appreciate to a five-figure price tag like the ones from 30 years ago, but if you like big Magnum revolvers with ported barrels and unfluted cylinders, they're worth a look.

THE GRIZZLY

Colt's original Grizzly was a King Cobra frame mated to a Python ribbed barrel with a ventilated rib and sported an unfluted cylinder. The new Grizzly is built on the larger Python frame and has six ports in the barrel and the unfluted cylinder. Barrel length is 4.25 inches. The rear iron sight can be removed and replaced with a dot after some modification; most dot mounts for Colt's new revolvers are based on the Anaconda pattern, so the Python or Grizzly requires drilling and tapping a hole to accept a second mounting screw.

As a true Magnum handgun, this is a huge step up from the original with the bigger frame.

THE KODIAK

The Kodiak is essentially an Anaconda with the same ported barrel and unfluted cylinder as the Grizzly. As opposed to the original Anaconda and Kodiak which were built on an upsized King Cobra frame, the new Anaconda and Kodiak are built on an upsized-Python frame. The Kodiak features a 4.25-inch barrel and has two screw holes under the rear sight

The new Grizzly is truly a magnum handgun, improving upon the original.

for installing a dot sight and mount, in addition to two other screw holes atop the rib on the barrel for installing a magnified optic.

MORE POWER

One of the big draws of large frame revolvers is their ability to fire a steady diet of Magnum ammunition or even extra-powerful flavors of Magnum ammunition.

Colt's Python and Anaconda, and by default the Grizzly and the Kodiak, fall into this category due to Colt's new methods of manufacturing these two revolvers. This has a lot to do with there being more metal in the top strap and how the new cylinders lock up.

The new cylinder system sets against the front of the frame instead of the crane, which improves strength. You'll notice on these revolvers that the cylinders have a slight bit of end-to-end movement. This is by design, because as the trigger is squeezed the cylinder locks solidly into position, halting rotation virtually eliminating the gap between the barrel and cylinder.

Every internal part on these revolvers is made from Colt's new stainless "Super Steel," which is very hard and tough. These also have the best tolerances Colt revolvers have ever had.

Colt simplified the inner mechanisms of these revolvers. The new ratchet is a complete circle of steel with the lockup hole is in the center, as opposed to six separate cogs like the Pythons and Anacondas from yesteryear. The end result is a much stronger mechanism providing faster lock time as a by-product, and results in a more-accurate revolver.

Double-action trigger pull on these two revolvers is in the 7- to 8-pound range, single-action is closer to 3 pounds.

OUTFITTING

The Grizzly was left in a stock configuration. The Kodiak took a little customization.

The grips are polymer ivory from Altamont Co. They're both beautiful and fit well, completely wrapping

The faux ivory Altamont Co grips paired with the Gideon mixes tradition and technology in the best ways.

There are some who won't like the ports, and those people shouldn't purchase these pistols.

the frame. The problem was the grip screw. While they sent three of varying lengths, none of them would thread into the escutcheon. Altamont's customer service was of no help, but eventually a different screw with an escutcheon that fit was found. It's not awful, but the company refused to own their own mistake.

Evolution Gun Works (EGW) was the choice for a mount. The problem with revolvers and electric-dot type optics is the optic tends to sit too high. EGW offer short rails in two configurations based on the footprint of the optic. This was for an RMR footprint, which covers a decent amount of optics. It requires removal of the rear sight and is an easy install.

For the sight, Gideon Optics sent an Omega with a 3 MOA green dot instead of traditional red. It's rugged and built out of 7075-T6 aluminum. The window has a large field of view, and it turns on in a millisecond if it is moved — and shuts off with no motion after 250 seconds. Battery life is up to 50,000 hours, or close to six years.

Remember that the Grizzly takes the same holsters, speedloaders, and other accessories as a post-2020 Python, and the Kodiak equivalent is the post-2020 Anaconda.

ON THE RANGE

When these revolvers were released, some shooters howled at either the ports in the barrels or the unfluted cylinders. The cylinder bit was a surprise, but it turned out that most just didn't like the look. The porting is a noted concern from some, but it's mostly based on misconceptions.

Some people are terrified of barrel porting. They envision columns of flame burning their eyebrows. The main issue you might run into with porting could be tiny bits of hot copper shearing off or excessive lead or copper build up on the front sight. The former is addressed with proper shooting glasses, the latter by cleaning your firearm when you're done shooting.

With the Grizzly, there were three different types of ammunition available: American Eagle .38 Special 130-grain FMJ, Federal .357 Magnum 125-grain JHP, and DoubleTap 180-grain hard-cast lead.

Recoil was extremely mild with the .38 Special. The heavier revolver with a ported barrel was a far cry from a typical J- or even K-frame. At 50 feet, the typical group size was 1.5 to 1.7 inches. This wasn't exactly match grade ammunition. The 125-Grain .357 felt a little more stout, but the ported barrel kept the gun on-target for faster follow-up shots. The group sizes remained consistent. DoubleTap went last and proved to be the most interesting. The loads were heavy, but not as savage as you might think with regard to recoil. The point of impact shifted noticeably from the lighter

The rearward-movement cylinder release can be hard to use in the best of circumstances.

Be they named after bears or snakes, Colt's classic reworks have been great.

bullets and yielded a six-shot group just about 2 inches in size.

The Kodiak was loaded with Double-Tap 240-grain hard cast lead. This one went a little further at 75 feet. Recoil was manageable, and this load felt more like a .44 Special or .45ACP both due to the weight and the porting. The Gideon Omega proved an excellent choice. Groups averaged a little over 2 inches in size. Getting the dot sighted in correctly was easy and not the headache some fear with this amount of height over bore.

BEAR GUNS OR NOT?

Contrary to popular opinion, many folks who live in or venture into brown bear country on a regular basis do so with a long-gun. A 12-gauge shotgun loaded with slugs or a bolt-action in .300 Winchester Magnum are common forms of medicine. Yet, big-bore handguns are used as well.

The Colt Kodiak would be good there with its six rounds of .44 Magnum, ideally in the form of heavy hard-cast bullets. The Grizzly might be adequate with the same (180 to 200 grains), but probably wouldn't be a first choice for Alaska or even Montana — despite the name, save it for the black bears in the lower 48.

Both revolvers proved to be smooth and reliable. Colt's super stainless steel has a good polish making these operate as smooth as butter. Before, after, and while shooting.

Perhaps the biggest issue with Colt revolvers in a defensive or even a hunting scenario is the unique way of opening the cylinder. Most double-action revolvers open the action by pushing a release either into the frame like a Ruger, or forward like a Smith & Wesson. Colt requires using the tip of your thumb to pull the release rearward.

Although I'm in my fourth decade of shooting Colt revolvers, it still feels awkward. No idea how our southpaw brothers and sisters do it. If you're more accustomed to those other brands, think carefully before you switch out to Colt, at least if you're going to use it beyond the range.

Looking pretty in a case and target shooting is one thing, protecting your life is completely different.

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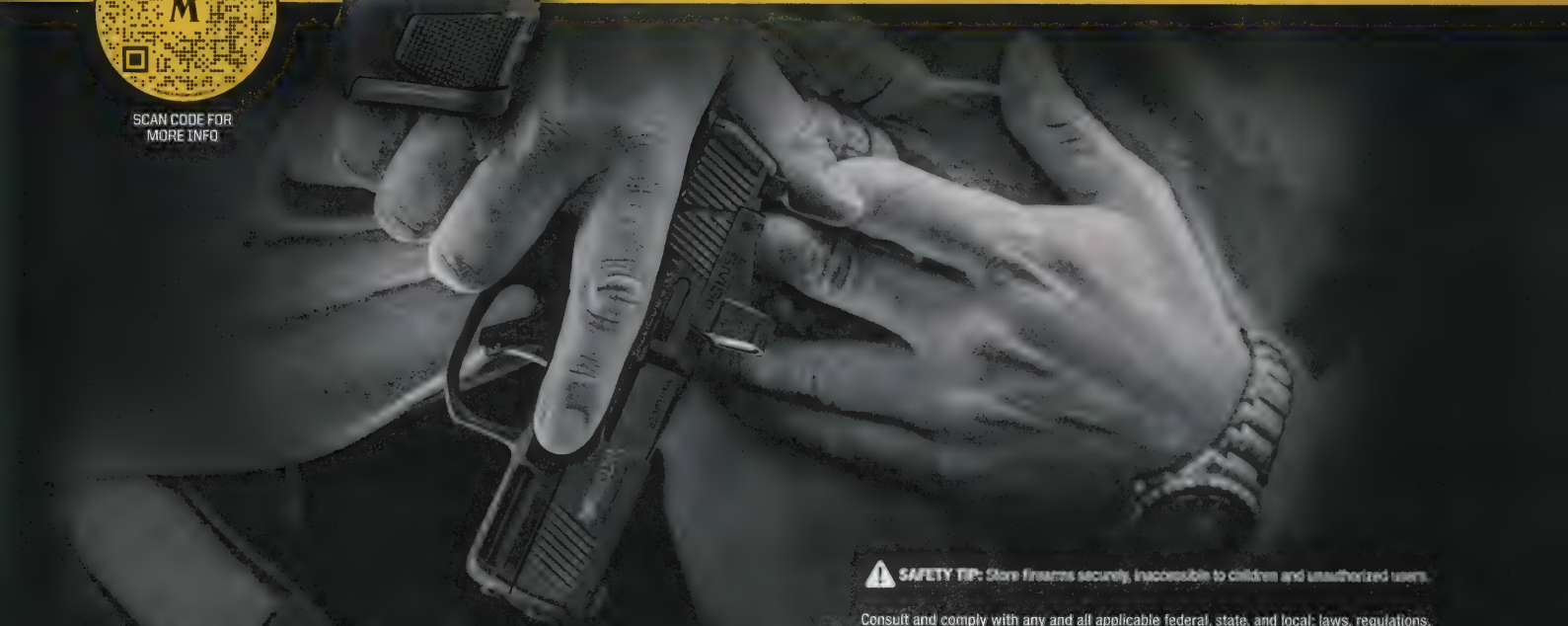

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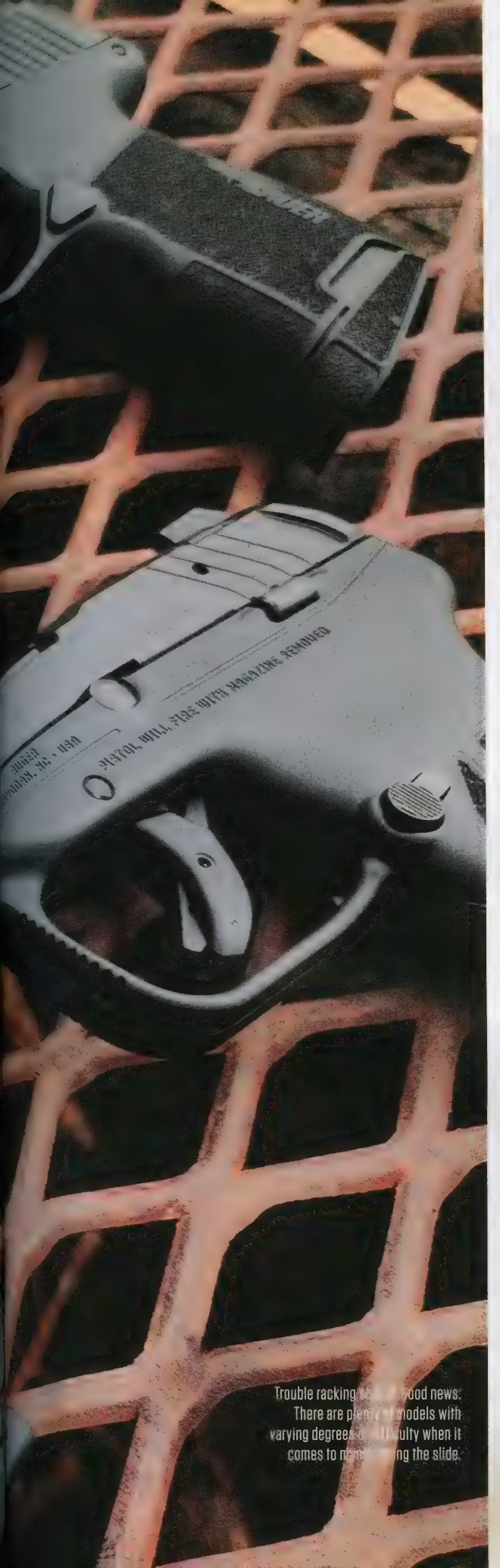


Trouble racking [illegible]ood news: There are plenty [illegible]models with varying degrees [illegible]ulty when it comes to m[illegible]ng the slide.

MYTHS, LIES, WOMEN & GUNS

Busting Gun Shop Counter "Common Knowledge"

BY KAT AINSWORTH STEVENS

It might be a quarter of the way into the 21st century, but women are still seen as amazing, magical creatures on the range. Opinions on women and guns tend to swing wildly to one side or the other — either she's a delicate female who might hurt herself if she wields anything but a .22LR or she's a delight to teach because women are so much easier than men. Myths and outright lies about women and guns are nothing new, but the fact that they're still pervasive gets a little frustrating (or downright infuriating). We're going to put some of those myths and lies to rest right now. It might seem harsh, but that doesn't mean it's wrong.

MYTH #1: SNUBBIES ARE LIFE

You'd think the idea that snub-nosed revolvers are the ideal first — or only — gun for women would've

Snubbies can be awesome, but they shouldn't be the go-to for women.

died a dramatic death long ago, but you'd be wrong. It continues to be a thing today to walk into a brick-and-mortar gun store and have the guy behind the counter direct women to the snubby display. Even better if they're pink or lavender, the latter of which seems to be the new pink (don't even start on Tiffany Blue).

There's nothing wrong with a good snubby, aside from the fact that felt recoil and muzzle rise are more significant — something the counter guys don't seem to understand. And no, there isn't anything wrong with revolvers in general. However, the woman who will benefit from having a snub-nosed revolver forced on her as her first gun is a rare one. Here's a news flash: Revolvers do break and when they do it's bad. Snubbies are uncomfortable to run for most shooters, and snubbies aren't great for much outside close-quarters use. It seems like this has been said a thousand times, but here we go again: Stop telling women to get snub-nosed revolvers. Actually, knock it off with revolvers-as-first-guns entirely.

MYTH #2: WOMEN ARE EASIER TO TEACH

This one might hurt some feelings, but guess what? Women aren't necessarily easier to teach — your sample size is just small. Here's the reality of women being easier to instruct on the range: Some are, some aren't. Having ovaries doesn't make someone automatically easy to teach.

There are endless myths about women and guns. Did you ever consider removing gender from the equation entirely?

For instance, you're a guy, and you have a woman on the firing line. Is your teaching style with her the same as it is for the men, or is it different? Is she a brand-new shooter who hasn't had a chance to create bad habits? Is she someone you feel protective over for whatever reason? Be honest. All these factors — and others — matter. The thing is that women are literally raised to be pleasant. Being polite is so deeply ingrained that many women would rather be nice to a potential assailant than risk offending someone. That hasn't really changed, despite what you might believe. Also, even today, far fewer women than men get seriously enough into guns to take classes. And

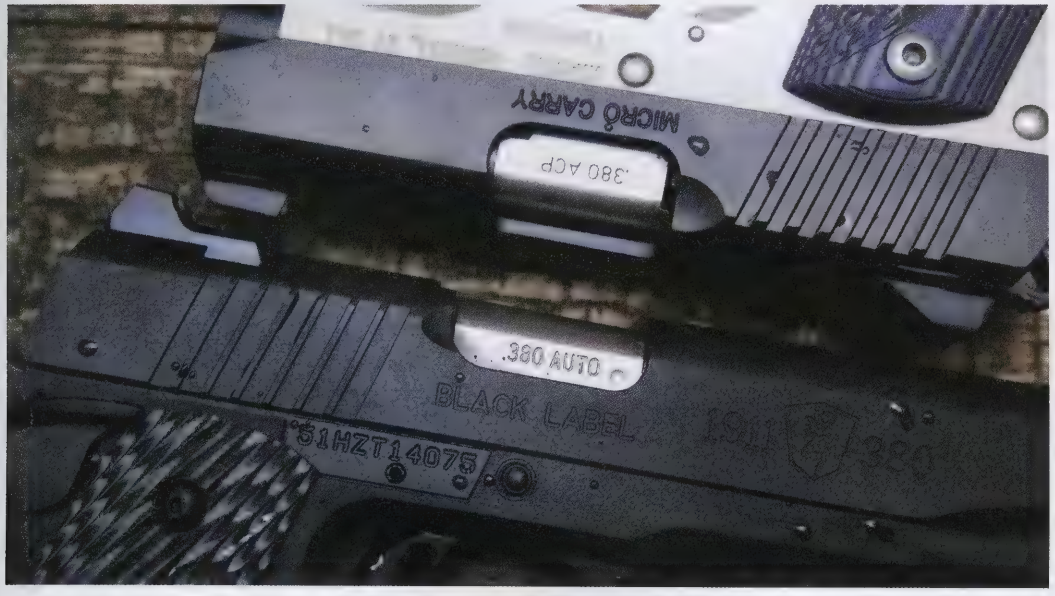
Women should have guns chambered in .380 ACP with grips that match their nail polish. Or not.

of the women who do, many prefer female instructors (more on that in a minute). Women aren't easier to teach, they're just different. And if you had more women on the firing line, you'd discover their attitudes are just as varied as the men's.

MYTH #3: WOMEN NEED OTHER WOMEN TO TEACH THEM

This one's an outright lie. Sure, there are all-female shooting organizations that thrive among a certain type of shooter, but they aren't the norm. There are also women who legitimately do better with women teaching them — at least at first — but that's the exception, not the rule. Say what you want about the dominant personalities of men or the potential histories of domestic violence making women not want to learn under a male instructor, but it isn't universally true. Before you get on me about this, understand that I have firsthand experience with surviving domestic violence. I also got my start learning from men. Can that make it harder to handle a male instructor at first? Yes, it can. Does that mean women should flock to other women and stay there? No.

Here's a hot tip for the women reading this: You don't need another woman to teach you, and most of the time you need to suck it up and get over your fears about having a male instructor. There are scores of talented men teaching, and you're doing yourself a major disservice by not grabbing any and every chance to learn from them. Odds are also unfortunately high you'll end up with a less-than-stellar teacher if you insist on learning from women only. It might be lousy and frustrating, but there simply aren't as many talented female instructors as there are men. That's reality, like it or not. You're feeding your own insecurities and fears by refusing to take classes from men.



The truth is that .380 ACP isn't the ideal defensive caliber for anyone, male or female.

MYTH #4: WOMEN CAN'T RACK A SLIDE

The idea that women don't have the upper body strength to rack a slide is more than a little ridiculous. This one usually comes down to needing to learn to finesse the slide rather than forcing it into submission (lots of guys go the force route with slides due to lack of experience). Most women can do it, and if they struggle even when taught finesse, there are ways to improve hand strength.

It's possible for anyone to have issues racking a slide due to issues like arthritis or injury. In those cases, there are options available such as the Smith & Wesson EZ line of handguns that really are easier to manipulate. But assuming a shooter can't handle racking a slide because they're female or have some struggles at first isn't helpful. Take the time to teach proper technique and go from there. Remember, just like not all shooters are the same, neither are all semi-autos.

MYTH #5: WOMEN NEED SMALL-CALIBER HANDGUNS

"Small caliber" can cover a rather broad range of options but usually

refers to .22LR and .380ACP. When the argument over .22LR starts, there's always someone ready to trot out the story of Bella Twin, the woman who dropped a grizzly with her .22LR back in 1957. There's also always some guy spouting the "well I wouldn't want to be shot with a .22!" line.

Look, there are cases where a .22LR is appropriate, but that goes right back to the exception rather than the rule. If a .22LR is all someone has access to or if they are truly incapable of handling a bigger caliber, then by all means go with the rimfire. But most of the time it's perfectly doable for women — and shooters in general — to run bigger guns. As for 9mm, it remains the beloved defensive caliber of the era and understandably so, but that doesn't mean women can't run anything bigger. Maybe .357 Magnum or 10mm are something she enjoys. Don't direct women to rimfires or .380ACP. Neither round is ideal for self-defense, and there's no reason women can't run the exact same defensive handguns men do.

Women don't have to take classes from other women or women-only classes, but that doesn't mean you won't find some great friends in the gun world.

It'd set a great example for our daughters if we quit pushing endless myths and lies about women and guns.

Maybe women want double-stack 10mms not plastic rimfires.

MYTH #6: WOMEN LIKE PINK (OR LAVENDER, OR TIFFANY BLUE)

Women like pink? Sure, and all men want their guns Cerakoted in Multicam paired with Punisher logos. See how ridiculous that sounds?

Countless other myths and lies about women and guns are out there, but if we covered them all it'd fill a book. Consider this: People with guns are just people with guns. The gun doesn't know or care about the gender of the person holding it, and maybe you shouldn't either. ■

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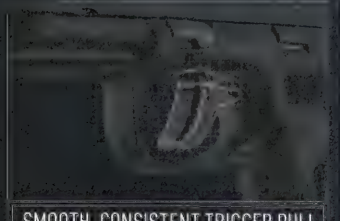
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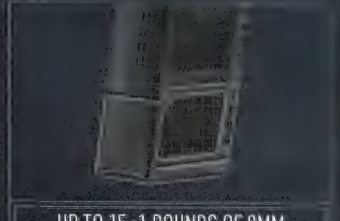
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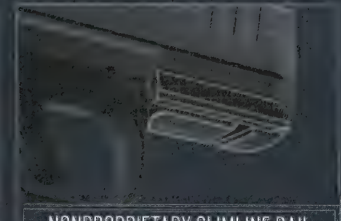
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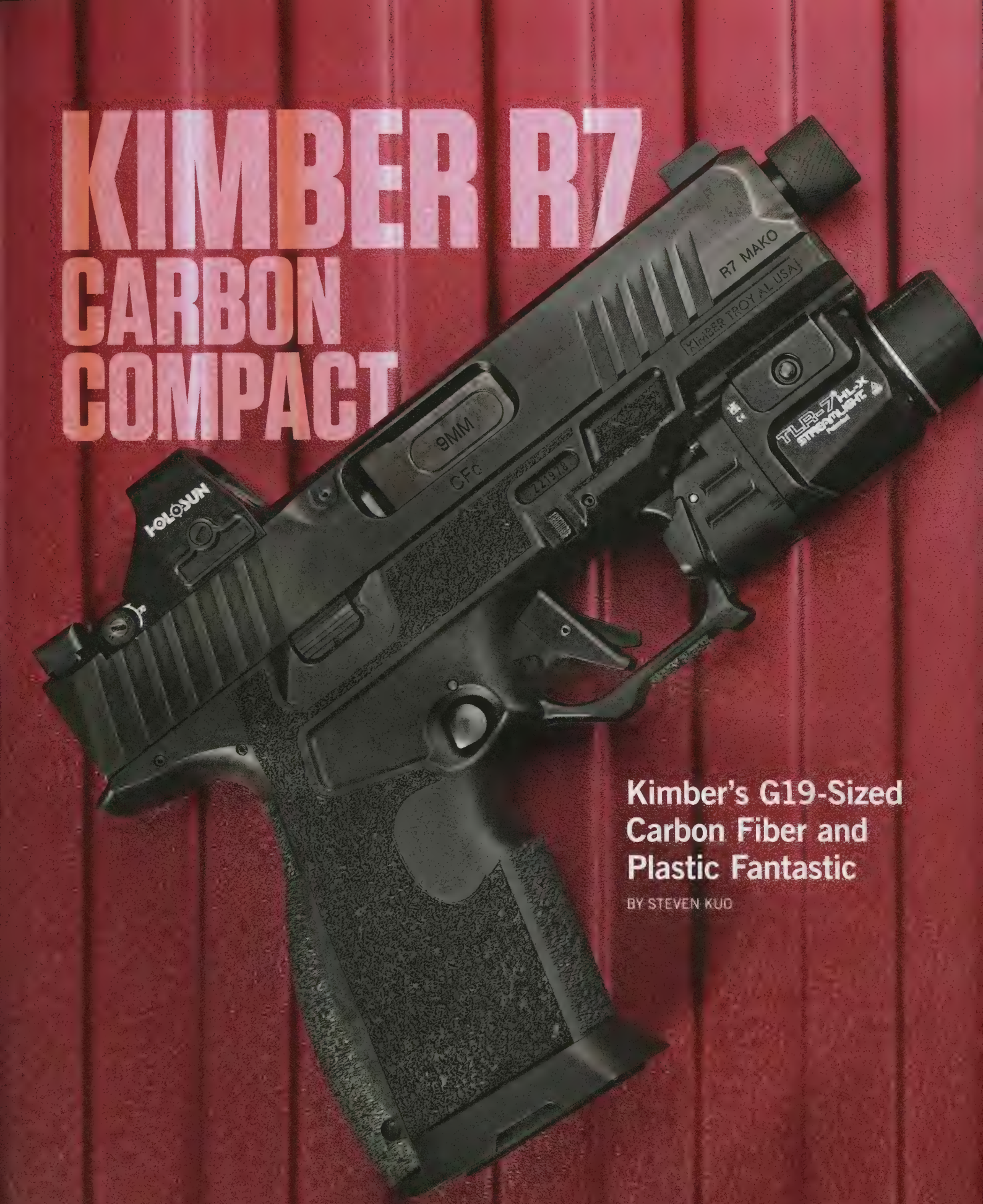

Kimber's G19-Sized Carbon Fiber and Plastic Fantastic

BY STEVEN KUO

When it comes to handguns, we're enjoying an embarrassment of riches these days. At this point, striker-fired pistol designs are so well-sorted that it seems harder to find new pistols that aren't reliable than those that are. Therefore, manufacturers need to continue pushing harder with increasingly refined guns to differentiate themselves.

One aspect of pistol design that's critically important is ergonomics. Pure marksmanship is one thing, but being able to deliver accurate fire on target as quickly as possible is yet another. If you only need to make accurate shots one at a time with no time constraints, ergonomics don't matter as much. As long as you align your sights on target and don't disturb them while breaking the trigger, you'll get your hit. For example, turn your pistol upside down and use your pinky to press the trigger. Once you get past the novelty, that first shot actually isn't a big deal — but following up quickly with a second shot sure does suck.

Firearms trainers stress the importance of your connection with your gun to be able to manage recoil, fire follow up shots, engage multiple targets, and so on. With a long gun, you have multiple points of contact with the firearm — your right hand, your left hand, your shoulder, and your cheek. With a handgun, it's just your two hands. Additionally, your trigger finger must be able to move quickly and independently. That's a lot to ask; no wonder shooting pistols well is a difficult task.

So with a pistol, your connection with the gun is all about your grip. You must ensure that the gun doesn't move around in your hands while shooting it. You need as much skin on the gun as possible. Your shooting hand wraps around the grip, high on the backstrap. Your support hand comes in from the other side, consuming the open space on the grip opposite your shooting hand.

This is why the ergonomics of a pistol are so important. This directly affects your connection with the gun, requiring consideration of the human hands as well as shooting technique. Moreover, everyone's hands are different. Some are big, some are small. Some have longer fingers and smaller palms, some the inverse.

Ergonomics influence other important things as well, such as ease of reloading, weapons manipulation, comfort for concealed carry, and use of accessories and sighting systems.

KIMBER R7 MAKO

Kimber has been making guns since 1979, starting with rifles and eventually becoming the largest producer of 1911 pistols. The company now has a massive 250,000 square foot manufacturing facility on 84 acres in Troy, Alabama.

In 2021, Kimber finally entered the striker-fired, polymer-frame pistol market with its R7 Mako line. Starting with a micro-compact 9mm, they subsequently released minor variations on that gun. That was a big deal for Kimber, as they've committed as a company in recent years to expand more aggressively and push into new segments. Note also that the R7 is made right here in America.

Flash forward to today, with Kimber's latest gun, the R7 Mako Carbon Compact. It's similar in size to a Glock 19 and features an entirely redesigned frame.

That frame is comprised of a very strong carbon-fiber-infused polymer matrix that boasts a 60,000-pound tensile strength.

Its design is also the foundation of the new gun's excellent ergonomics. Its beavertail allows you to grip higher on the gun without getting bitten by the slide. Similarly, there's an unusually high undercut at the rear of the trigger guard, positioning the rest of your hand as high as possible — actually higher than the toe of the trigger shoe. Almost the entire grip is textured with stippling for enhanced traction.

The trigger guard also has stippling on the front and bottom, which is undercut as well. The rear of the dust cover is textured, with a thumb shelf to help control the gun. The backstrap is interchangeable, with four different sizes to match your hand.

All of these enhancements serve to give you a natural, secure grip on the gun, as high as possible.

A flared magwell makes reloads of the 15-round magazines quick and easy. It's well integrated and low profile, but you can remove it entirely if you wish to minimize the pistol's footprint. And a three-slot Picatinny rail on the dust cover helps you find just the right position for a weapon-mounted light.

Controls are completely ambidextrous, with fully functional magazine releases and slide stops on both sides of the gun. Kimber also fitted their flat-faced Performance Carry trigger.

Moving up top, the nitrided stainless steel slide has front and rear serrations, three-dot TruGlo Tritium Pro night sights (orange in front and white in the rear), and an optic cut compatible with Holosun-K and RMS-C footprints.

Apologies for the uncouth reference, but the R7's side-mounted ejection port is reminiscent of Hi-Point pistols (see Crapshoot on page 16 to compare). Kimber had reasons for this choice, aesthetic associations be damned. First, it allowed them to position the barrel's lug at the very end, on top, minimizing the barrel's tilt when it unlocks from the slide and reducing felt recoil. Second, the closed top makes the slide stronger. Finally, spent casings eject sideways rather than potentially hitting your optic, and the glass stays cleaner and free of residue.

Note that the stainless steel barrel is optionally available with 1/2x28 threads to attach a suppressor; it's 4.4 inches long with threads and 3.9 inches without.

All corners on the gun are smoothed or beveled, for a comfortable experience when handling or carrying it.

Field stripping the R7 is a little different than you might be used to. The slide assembly lifts off the frame rather than sliding all the way off. First, remove the magazine and make sure the gun is completely unloaded. Retract the slide about a quarter of an inch and hold it there. Pull down on the take down tabs, and let the slide go forward. Pointing in a safe direction, press the trigger to release the striker from the trigger bar sear surface. Then push the slide forward a bit and lift it straight up off the frame. Now, you can remove the captive recoil spring assembly and barrel, as you'd expect. If you have a threaded barrel, you'll need to remove the thread protector first. Reverse these steps for reassembly.

PUTTING THE ERGOS TO THE TEST

The Kimber R7 Carbon Compact comes in four variations: with and without a threaded barrel and bundled with or without a Holosun HS407K already installed. Our sample came fully loaded — "TFS OI" stands for "threaded for suppressor" and "optics included." We also fitted it with Streamlight's 22,000 candela rechargeable TLR-7 HL-X light.

From first hefting the pistol, you'll notice the attention to detail on its ergonomics. The trigger guard undercut is so high that it almost looks awkward. But combined with the high

The Kimber R7 Carbon Compact can be purchased with or without a threaded barrel and with or without a Holosun HS407K already installed.

Black Point Tactical already offers fitments for the new R7. This is their DualPoint holster.

The Streamlight TLR-7 HL-X is a great fit for the R7, with activation switches easily at hand and a ton of candelas down range.

beavertail, this allows you to reduce the leverage the recoil impulse has on you. The interchangeable backstraps accommodate different hand sizes, though our sample gun didn't come with extras so we weren't able to test them ourselves. The sides of the grip have a moderate palm swell that helps fill your hands more comfortably — none of that holding-a-brick feeling here. And the trigger guard, mini-gas pedals, and mag well provide additional leverage points. The stippling locks your hands in place, though we wouldn't have minded if it were a little more aggressive — however, that would sacrifice comfort when carrying it against bare skin. All of these thoughtful touches contribute to an excellent connection to the gun. The only missed opportunity would be to make the palm swells interchangeable for different sizes as well.

The magazine release can be pressed from either side; the circular-ish button is inset so you won't inadvertently actuate it, but the grip is

cleared out around it so you get good access to it for quick mag changes. The magwell makes for a large target too. The slide release stands proud of the side of the gun but has a fence around it, so it's easy to hit but not by accident. And again, there's one on each side at all times, so the R7 has you covered no matter if you're a lefty or righty or unexpectedly lose the use of your primary hand.

The side ejection port looks odd on a pistol, but it works as advertised. We're used to cleaning residue off our optics, but the glass on the Holosun was only marred by greasy fingerprints.

We ran the R7 Carbon Compact through drills and stages, both at a Kimber event and back at home on the range. The grip design contributed to good recoil management, with moderate muzzle rise. We ripped off multiple shot strings and target transitions with ease. Throughout our shooting sessions, we didn't experience a single malfunction; we should note that our sample guns did not appear to be fresh out of the box. This probably accounts for the worn-in trigger pull reading.

Top left: Note barrel locking lug on the top of the barrel at its aft-most end, and corresponding recess on the inside of the slide.

Top right: Optional magwell and interchangeable backstraps can be easily serviced.

Kimber's Performance Carry trigger is flat-faced and has less travel before the release than most, breaking cleanly at a lighter-than-expected and highly appreciated 4 pounds on our sample, ending up nearly vertical. Kimber's literature says the specification is 5 to 6.75 pounds. The reset is tactile and audible, but not very short.

We also put the R7 on bags to shoot five-shot groups and check velocities with our handy Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph. CCI Brass 115-grain FMJ returned 9 MOA groups at 1,160 feet per second. Igman 124-grain FMJ did a little better with 8.3 MOA at 1,147 feet per second. Federal Syntech Defense 138-grain SJHP averaged 1,072 feet per second with an 8.1 MOA group. And Federal Gold Medal Action Pistol turned in the smallest group at 7.8 MOA and 910 feet per second.

Black Point Tactical already has a fitment available for the new R7

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KIMBER
R7 MAKO CARBON COMPACT (TFS) (OI)

Caliber:	9mm
Barrel Length:	4.4 inches
Overall Length:	7.6 inches
Overall Height:	5.8 inches
Width:	1.2 inches
Weight Unloaded:	25 ounces
Magazine Capacity:	15+1 rounds
MSRP:	Starts at $735, $1,080 as shown
URL:	kimberamerica.com

Accessories

BlackPoint Tactical DualPoint AIWB holster	$110
Streamlight TL-7 HL-X USB weaponlight	$295

URLs:
Federal Ammunition: federalpremium.com
Garmin: garmin.com
Global Ordnance: globalordnance.com
Holosun: holosun.com
Streamlight: streamlight.com

Carbon Compact, so we used their DualPoint holster to carry the gun around town. The claw helped tuck the grip against our body, and if you've ever carried a Glock 19 — as many people do — it felt similar. So it's good to go for everyday carry, though we'd remove the magwell for this purpose.

LOOSE ROUNDS

We often bring review guns to the range with some folks with differing backgrounds and physical sizes to get their feedback. All of our testers really appreciated the ergonomics of the new Kimber. Two with smaller hands wanted to swap in a slimmer backstrap; too bad we didn't have one on hand. All found it to be controllable under recoil with a relatively mild impulse. Our law enforcement tester has carried Glocks on duty for decades, mostly a Glock 21. Immediately after picking up the R7, he was raving about how well it fit his hand.

The proof is in the pudding — he wanted to buy our sample gun on the spot. Unfortunately, he'll have to place an order, as this one needs to go back to Kimber. But if you can get your hands on the R7 Carbon Compact, definitely try it out. You may find its excellent ergonomics have you reaching for your credit card as well.

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More information and ticket pre-sales are now available at the CANCON website.

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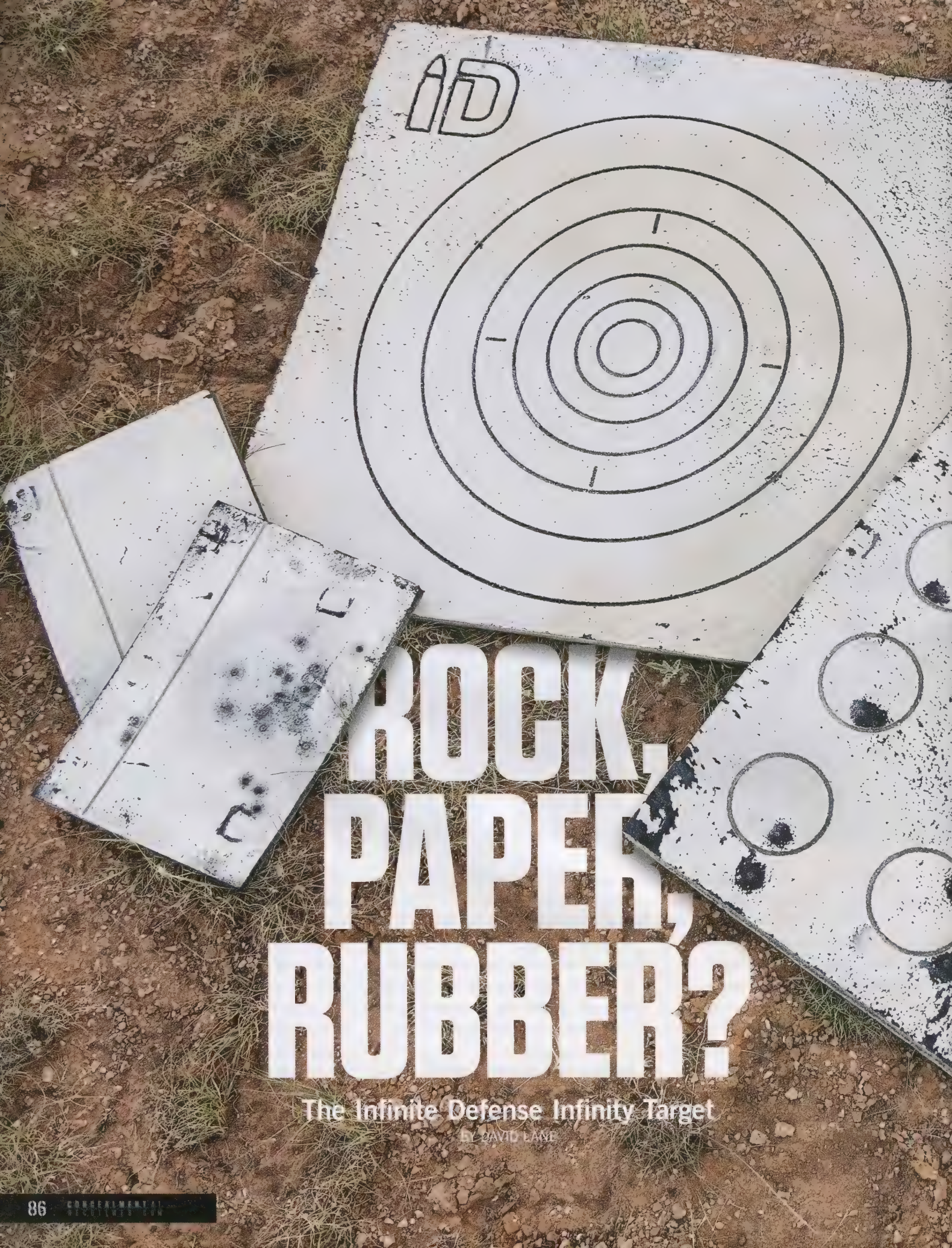


ROCK, PAPER, RUBBER?

The Infinite Defense Infinity Target

By DAVID LANE

It won't win you any games of Rock, Paper, Scissors, but rubber is an attractive option if you want a target that lasts almost forever. It's an older concept but benefits from newer materials. Essentially, Infinity Targets are sheets of kind of special rubber shaped into targets.

The primary method of mounting them is with large clips. To "reset" the targets you spray paint them any color you want. Mount the target, shoot the target, paint the target. That simple.

ON THE RANGE

Infinity Targets are best mounted using simple clips. Each target comes with clips for mounting, but buying some extras off Amazon is a good idea since sooner or later you'll put a round through it.

Bases can be bought directly from Infinite Defense, but just about any shooting supply shop in the nation will have them. And the recommended 1x2-inch wood uprights are available at your local home improvement store or lumber yard for just a couple bucks.

Many local clubs and ranges provide the wood and bases, but the targets can often be clapped-out leftovers from shooting matches. Using the provided wood and bases, clipping the Infinity Targets is easy and pretty self-explanatory.

Infinite Defense has a lot of options; here we use the 24x24 B6, 24x18 Circle Drill, and 9x11 A-Zones. The A-Zones are larger than true A-Zones, so there's room to clip them to a stand and still have the entire 6x11 A-Zone area available to shoot.

These have been used for more than two months, and I kind of love these targets. The A-Zones are great for setting up drills and mock stages because they give you exactly what you need and nothing else. Setting them at different heights is easy because they only require one stick of wood to mount and are just easier to move around.

In general, Circle Drill or Dot Drill targets are fantastic, and it's great to have a pack of them in the range bag at all times. There are just so many different drills you can do with them and can train so many skills off one simple target. The Infinity Targets just adds to this because you can paint your own. Using different colors you can quickly mix and match a new drill on the fly. Or just paint it white and make it harder.

The B6 is a big target, and it works especially well for longer distances. Put it out a few hundred yards and it's nice for practice. While it's a lot easier to drag out than a steel target, you'll have to call your hits like paper.

JUDGMENT

We've shot and used a lot of targets over the years, and frankly it didn't seem like something so simple could be so impressive. But the Infinity Targets work exactly like they claim. Easy to reset, easy to use, and just really handy to have around.

Seeing hits is fairly easy since the paint flakes off kind of like a splatter target. While shooting steel is nice for instant feedback, the quiet hits off rubber are also kind of nice since it makes for a quieter range session. This is especially true when running suppressed.

BENEFITS

Infinity Targets are easy, make a lot less trash to clean up, and you have a lot more options with them if you keep a couple of colors of spray paint with you.

As pure convenience items, there's a lot going for them over paper.

They are also weatherproof, important for those in wetter climates. Rain and wind basically don't affect them, and certainly not even close to paper. At most the rain can make wet paint run, but it needs to be really pouring down to be a real issue. The extra weight of the rubber keeps them from flying off during even pretty strong wind.

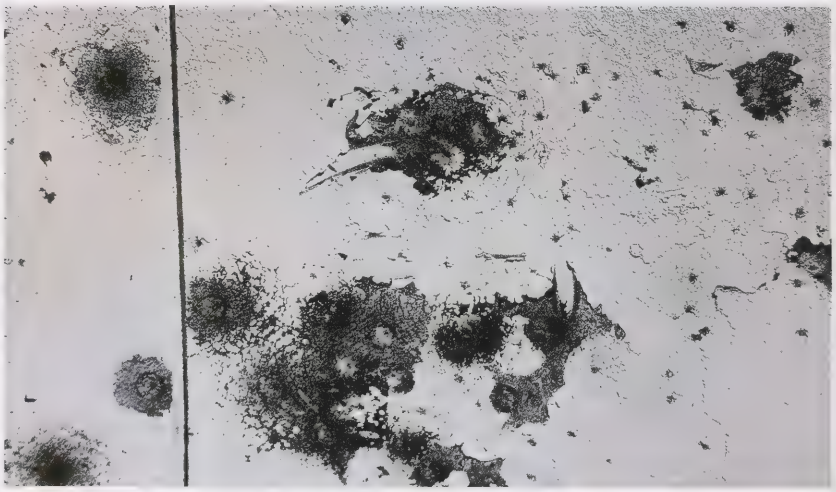
"If it ain't raining we ain't training" might be true, but Infinity Targets make the logistics of it a lot more manageable.

DOWNSIDES

The big thing that stands out about the Infinity Targets versus paper or steel is the *smell*. Oh my lord, do not store these in a small confined space. Bad idea.

Some targets were left in a closet for a couple of weeks between range sessions, and when that door opened, the smell almost knocked everyone over. The off-gassing rubber smells like concentrated tire shop — seriously a *LOT* of smell.

It takes a few weeks, but the smell does become less potent, but even after two months some care must still be taken to not leave the targets in a hot car after heading home from the range. And if they sit overnight, it's not going to be pleasant at all.



These are like everlasting shoot-n-see targets, easily renewed with a rattlecan.

Leaving them in a well-ventilated corner of the garage works well or outside in a shed.

Another downside is that while these targets can go a long way in supplanting paper and steel, they don't entirely replace paper or steel.

For getting a really good precision zero on guns, paper is hard to beat. Paper gives clean, easy-to-see holes compared to paint peeling off rubber. The same goes for testing group size in general. Paper is a lot lighter, too. If you're limited to an indoor range that uses the overhanging pulleys, they aren't likely to let you try hanging a rubber mat on them.

For instant feedback on hits and misses or something reactive like knocking down a popper, steel is king. One of hopes we had with the Infinity Targets was that they would be able to be easily used for long range shooting, with the paint hits working kind of like splatter targets. This kind of held true, but it isn't perfect. The trade-off of not having to haul steel out hundreds of yards is really nice.

Infinite Defense does have self-healing hanging targets available, however.

Get yourself some strong springform clips, along with a pair of spares for when they're inevitably shot.

COST: INFINITY VS. PAPER

Infinite Defense says "9mm and 5.56/2.23 you are going to look at getting 5,000-plus rounds throughout (gen2) the entire target. Our competition shooters typically get 5-6,000 rounds before replacement is needed."

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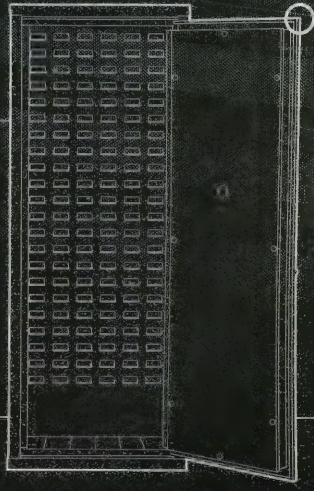

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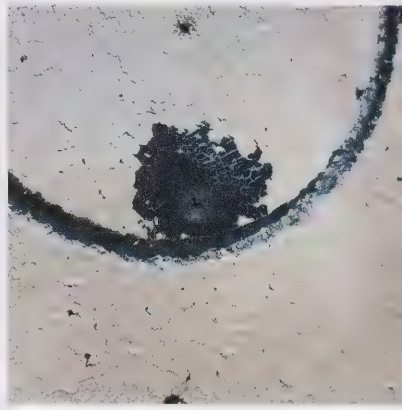

Let's take the average and call it 5,500 rounds per target. For a test case, we'll use the USPSA targets since those are easy to compare to cardboard.

USPSA Infinity Target runs $129 plus $16.52 shipping (at time of writing), equaling $145.52 or $0.03 per hit for 5,500 hits. Let's say a cardboard USPSA target lasts about 100 hits. A pack of 25 USPSA cardboard targets costs $0.94 per target, plus $22.15 shipping (at time of writing), equaling $45.64 or $0.02 per hit. This number drops if you buy in bulk and get 100 targets for $79 plus shipping, bringing it down to $0.01 per hit.

It's always a good idea to have a dot target with you on the range. You can use the one from Infinity Targets for the traditional Dot Torture or any number of new variations.

Even after the painting the lines remain, making it seem a little like magic.

Pure cost, cardboard can save you money. But you miss the benefits of the Infinity Targets like very fast/easy reset, easier mounting, and practically zero trash to clean up. Ever.

And that's for the larger targets. While the larger targets are good, some like the smaller targets more. Infinity Defense's A-Zone target is only $50 for two. If you go with those, these become way cheaper than cardboard.

They are also very lightweight, easier to mount, and give you a lot of options for placement. While they aren't perfect for everyone, they are pretty awesome if you have someplace other than your house or car to store them.

LOOSE ROUNDS

Really though, it doesn't have to be a four-way of paper versus cardboard versus steel versus rubber. They all have some clear advantages, with the Infinity Targets being one of the latest options. If you're in the market for some new targets and want to think outside the box a little, you should strongly consider some of these.

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DOUBLE-ACTION DUTY

CZ's P-09 NOCTURNE

BY STEVEN KUO

Striker-fired pistols, such as Glocks, are now ubiquitous. These types of guns have a spring-loaded striker, or firing pin, that hits a cartridge's primer to discharge it when you press the trigger. However, of late there's been a resurgence of interest in double-action/single-action (DA/SA) pistols. They have a pivoting hammer that falls and strikes the firing pin when you pull the trigger. If the hammer is down, as it typically would be while you have it holstered, pulling the trigger first cocks the hammer then drops it — this is double-action mode. After your first shot, the slide cycles and the hammer will then be cocked. At this point, the gun is in single-action mode; pressing the trigger simply releases the hammer.

A key advantage of striker-fired guns is that the trigger feels the same for every shot. Designs like Glock's trigger mechanism are very robust and efficient. The amount of pressure required to drop the striker can be configured to be quite low with relatively short travel. Fundamentally, striker-fired guns are designed with trigger discipline as their primary safety mechanism —

they'll only discharge if you physically pull the trigger. But if that trigger is pulled, even "accidentally" or negligently, you'll get a bang. Light triggers with short travel make excellent trigger discipline extremely critical to avoid a potential disaster. Moreover, reholstering can be treacherous; numerous people have taken a trip to the ER thanks to a shirt or other obstruction catching their trigger. Many manufacturers now offer optional manual safeties on their striker-fired handguns.

On the other hand, DA/SA pistols are intended to be carried in double-action mode, where the long pull required to cock the hammer before dropping it provides a great deal of margin for safety, ensuring that you really meant to fire the shot. External hammers make it easy to check the status of your gun, either visually or by feel; make a habit of putting your thumb on the hammer when holstering to ensure it's done safely.

Additionally, once you get past that first double-action trigger pull, all subsequent shots will be in single-action — which will generally be more crisp and more consistent than spongy striker-fired triggers.

Every year, more and more new shooters join the ranks of those focused on self-defense and intending to carry a gun. Also, appendix inside-the-waistband carry has become increasingly popular. Naturally, safety is a big concern for these folks, whether they're new to carrying a loaded gun or wary of pointing their blasters at their junk. The loudest on the internet disagree, but manufacturers tell us quite a lot of customers want manual safeties on striker-fired guns.

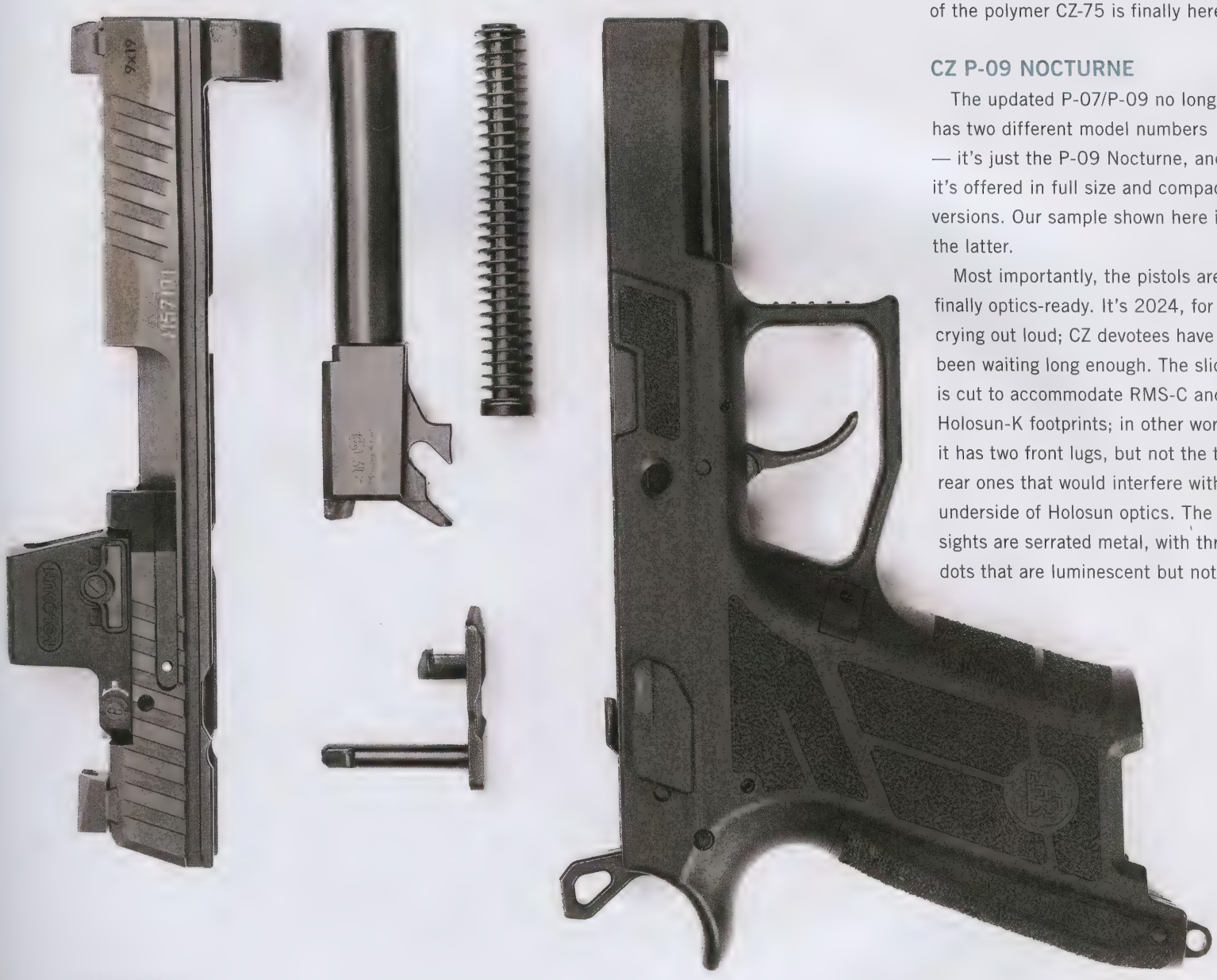
DA/SA guns inherently provide this peace of mind, along with the other benefits we mentioned above. The flip side is that you'll need to invest extra effort to train for the double-action pull, as well as making decocking your gun second nature. This isn't hard, and you'll be a better shooter for it.

THE CZ WAY

CZ has become synonymous with DA/SA pistols, as their CZ-75 family of guns continues to be wildly popular to this day, for recreation, self-defense, and especially competition.

In 2009, CZ released the P-07, like a compact CZ-75 with a polymer frame and similar in size to a Glock 19, though it deviates from the 75 series with the barrel locking up on the ejection port rather than with a lug. Four years later, they introduced a full-size version and called it the P-09. CZ then updated the P-07 in 2014, adding forward cocking serrations, interchangeable backstraps, metal sights, fiber-reinforced polymer for the frame, and a revised trigger and hammer.

10 years later, the next generation of the polymer CZ-75 is finally here.



The P-09 Nocturne disassembles just like a CZ-75. However, note the barrel locks up on the ejection port like most modern pistols rather than with a lug.

CZ P-09 NOCTURNE

The updated P-07/P-09 no longer has two different model numbers — it's just the P-09 Nocturne, and it's offered in full size and compact versions. Our sample shown here is the latter.

Most importantly, the pistols are finally optics-ready. It's 2024, for crying out loud; CZ devotees have been waiting long enough. The slide is cut to accommodate RMS-C and Holosun-K footprints; in other words, it has two front lugs, but not the two rear ones that would interfere with the underside of Holosun optics. The iron sights are serrated metal, with three dots that are luminescent but not

tritium. The rear sight has a raked front that allows for racking the slide, if you don't make use of the optic cut.

Ergonomics have also been improved. The frame is more extensively textured, with grippier stippling on both sides, the front strap, the backstrap, and on the sides of the dust cover for a reference point. The slide stop and decocker levers have also been revised.

The slide has also been enhanced, with more aggressive front and rear serrations. The front serrations extend over the top of the slide for a better grip. This is especially helpful for the iconic inverted CZ slide, with the slide rails on the inside of the frame, since there's less real estate on the slide to grab onto.

As before, the P-09 Nocturne features CZ's Omega SA/DA trigger, including interchangeable ambidextrous safety levers. You can swap out the decocker for a manual safety that allows you to run the gun cocked-and-locked like a 1911, if you so choose. The pistol also has a firing pin block and a safety notch on the hammer, cementing its appeal for concealed carry.

The barrel is cold hammer forged, and the frame is comprised of fiberglass-reinforced polymer, with a Picatinny rail on the dust cover and a beavertail at the opposite end.

Flush-fit magazines hold 15 rounds, with a scalloped base pad and matching cut out on the frame in case you need to grip and rip it out of the gun.

Top left: Interchangeable backstraps customize the gun for your hand.

Top right: Optic cut takes sights with the RMS-C or Holosun-K footprint.

Bottom: The decocker can be swapped out for a manual safety (shown here) if you prefer to roll out cocked-and-locked.

Fieldstripping the P-09 for maintenance and cleaning is the same procedure as for a CZ-75. First, remove the magazine and ensure the gun is unloaded. Make sure no live ammunition is nearby. If you have a manual safety, flick it off. Set the hammer in the half-cock position. Slightly retract the slide so that the mark on the left side near the rear aligns with the corresponding mark on the frame. Hold it in place, and push out the slide stop from the right side of the gun. You can use a punch, though the base of a magazine works just fine. Pull the slide stop out of the frame. The slide assembly will now come off the front of the frame. Remove the recoil spring and barrel. That's it. Assembly is the reverse of these steps.

P-09 NOCTURNE REPORTING FOR DUTY

As a Glock 19-sized gun, the P-09 Nocturne is a general-purpose pistol. You can carry it, train with it, and compete with it.

We shot the CZ off a sandbag to measure five-shot groups and muzzle velocity with our Garmin Xero C1 Pro chronograph. CCI Brass 115-grain FMJ clocked an average of 1,150 feet per second and grouped around 11 MOA. Federal Syntech Defense 138-grain SJHP gave us 9 MOA groups at 1,047 feet per second. Igman 124-grain FMJ logged an average of 1,117 feet per second with 7 to 9 MOA groups. Finally, we managed one 5 MOA group with Federal Gold Medal Action Pistol 147-grain FMJ, with the rest up to 9 MOA, at an average of 873.3 feet per second.

We weren't sure what a "nocturne" is, so we looked it up. The online dictionary says it's music that evokes the night. The gun's black, but it doesn't even come with night sights. Thus, we fitted it with the excellent 800-lumen SureFire XR1 rechargeable weapon mounted light and Holosun EPS green multi-reticle enclosed-emitter optic, and our P-09 seemed a lot happier and enjoyed making music on our steel targets.

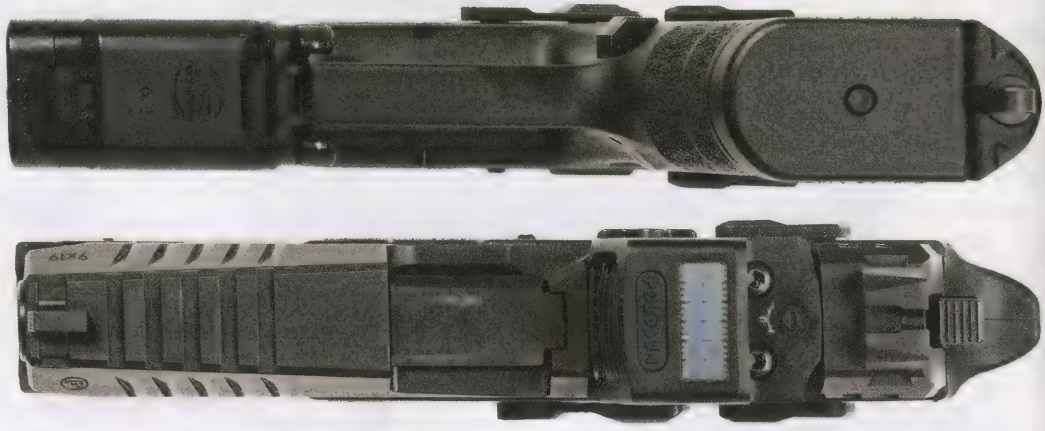
Hosing with the P-09 Nocturne is a blast.

In double-action mode, the trigger broke at a hefty 10.5 pounds, while single-action was just above 4 pounds. Importantly, the release point in both modes was pretty similar, which makes it easier to shoot the DA/SA transition well.

We opted to retain the decocker, optimizing the gun for concealed carry, since one of the key reasons to get a P-09 for carry is its DA mode. The manual safety isn't as ergonomic as a good 1911's thumb safety, so we didn't enjoy it that much anyway. Swapping the components is straightforward but fiddly; be careful not to lose the safety detent plunger and spring.

CZs are known for their comfortable ergonomics; the P-09 Nocturne's grip provided good traction without chewing up your belly. The interchangeable backstraps are great to fine tune it for your hand size. We'd like CZ to also

Front slide serrations cover both sides and the top, helping to get a firm grip as slide real estate is limited with the inverted slide rails.



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texture the trigger guard and add a bit of a shelf to the stippled pads on the dust cover for some leverage.

There's a very annoying lanyard on the bottom of the grip; you smash it with your palm with every reload. Unfortunately, it's built-in to the main spring plug. We're about to grind the damn thing off.

The gun points naturally and shoots very nicely. We were able to quickly dial it in with predictive double drills to return on target on recoil. From time to time, we would unintentionally engage the slide stop during a string of fire and had to adjust our grip to avoid it. Also, in the first eight magazines, we experienced two instances where the next round got hung up and the slide didn't go fully into battery. One was with CCI Blazer Brass and the other was Federal Syntech Defense. It never repeated after that, so we weren't able to figure out exactly what happened. Once we got past this, the CZ chugged along happily and performed very well in drills and USPSA-style stages.

If you can comfortably and effectively carry a Glock 19, you can do the same with the P-09 Nocturne, while enjoying the enhanced safety and peace of mind of its double-action mode. You should be prepared to devote extra time to training on that DA trigger though. Note that CZs are known to be vulnerable to eventually breaking firing pin retaining roll pins with heavy dry fire if you don't use snap caps (one is included with the gun) — there are some aftermarket solutions for this.

If you're ready to join Team Long Pull for your carry gun, you should check out the new P-09 Nocturne. ■

CZ
P-09 C NOCTURNE

Caliber:	9mm
Barrel Length:	3.74 inches
Overall Length:	7.3 inches
Overall Height:	5.4 inches
Width:	1.5 inches
Weight Unloaded:	28.4 ounces
Magazine Capacity:	15+1 rounds
MSRP:	$549
URL:	cz-usa.com

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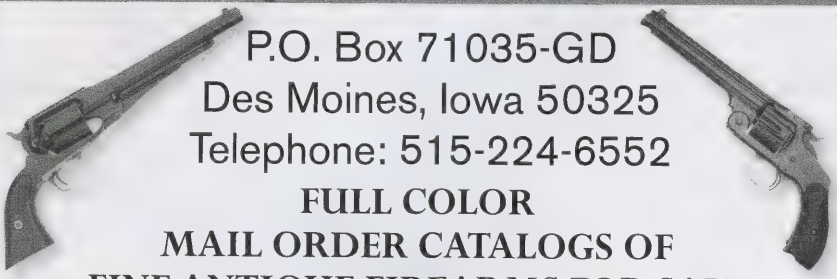

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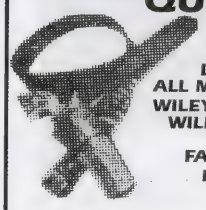

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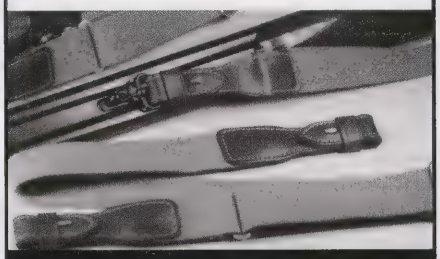

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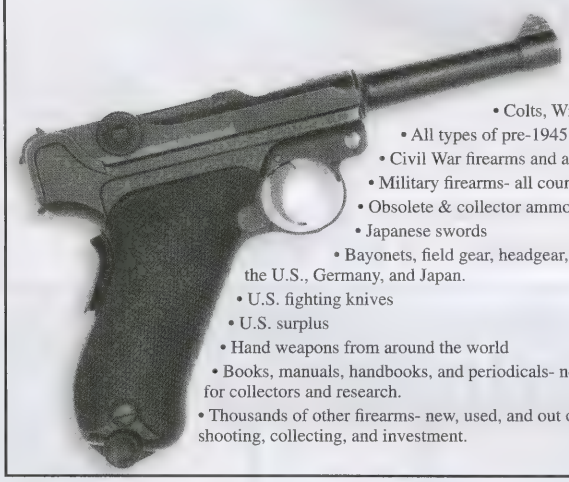

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ARTS & CRAFTS

BY DAVE MERRILL

We've all heard the phrase, "better to be judged by 12 than carried by six," the slightly less noxious version of "shoot first and ask questions later." While this sort of grandstanding can be fun among chest-beating Facebook friends, the reality certainly isn't. Shooting someone who didn't need to be shot because of incompetence might seem bad enough, but it's worse if that person is a child, friend, or family member. Double plus if it results with a sentence of 25 to life. This isn't made up either.

There *are* real situations where a literal split second may save skin, but the reality is that they are exceedingly rare outside of war or special protection details. And even within those specific situations, great care and training take place to ensure that mistakes are minimized; the difference in collateral damage during structural fights between early and late GWOT is astounding.

We aren't just randos with guns, though. There's a better than good chance if you're reading this work that you've put some time into training and pondered some possibilities.

THREATS

Everything can be a target, but it's only a threat if it has the means and motivation to cause death or grievous injury. It's paramount to properly identify a *threat* before you pull a trigger. Advanced situational training is a comprehensive way to ingrain this skill but it's harder to put on paper. Realistic 2D and 3D targets with objects in hands also have their place ... so what the heck is on the target to the right?

ARTS & CRAFTS

There are two cutouts, one pistol and one phone. The idea is to place them on targets you're already using, even if it's a standard bull's-eye. Give it an intentional look and consideration before squeezing the trigger. It doesn't have to take long (it most often happens concurrent to the draw) but it needs to be performed. This works even if you place the pistol placard yourself.

Bear in mind that just because there's a gun that doesn't mean one is free to just let loose — police have pistols, remember. The handgun or phone is just one indicator among a tapestry, all of which have to be taken in and processed before that pull in the real world. This exercise is to get you used to looking first.

Pay particular attention to where you aim after spotting a gun. Quite often people end up being shot in the hands, both aggressors and defenders alike. This is because it's natural to threat-focus, which often ends up being on the gun itself, and we'll naturally shoot where we look. But if you want to end this situation, you need to focus on who is holding it rather than the handgun. Identify a threat, decide to shoot, then find your bull's-eye.

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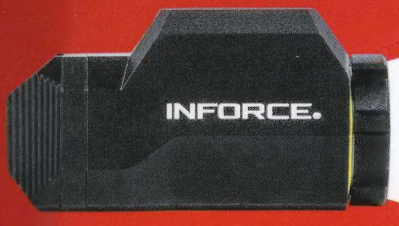

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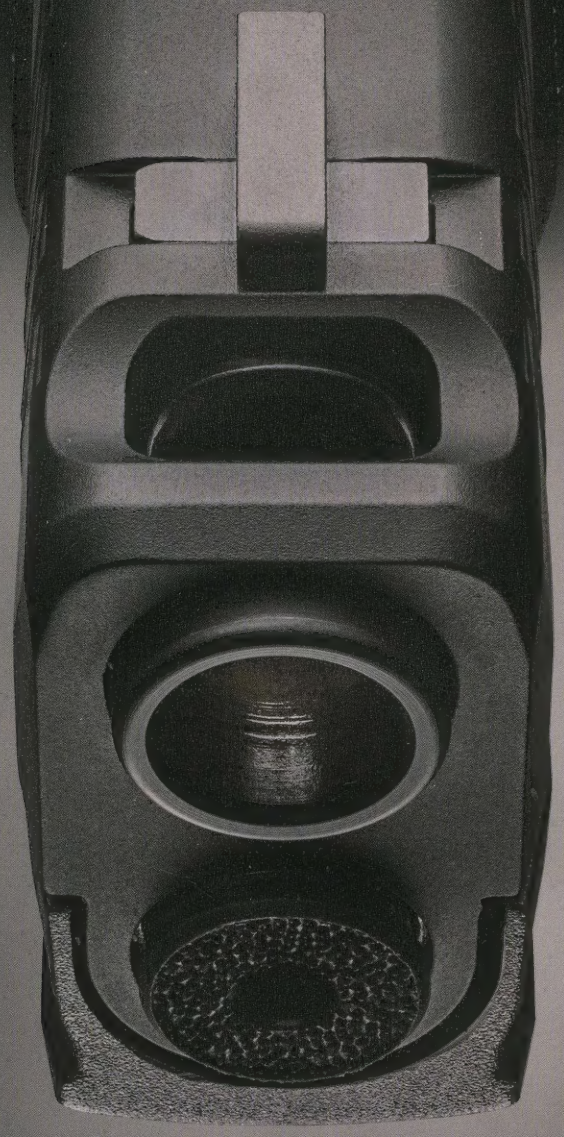

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